PlayStation 3 | PlayStation Portable | PlayStation Vita

PlayStation®

The Official Magazine

Issue 055 February 2012

REVIEWED
Final Fantasy
Fate/Extra
Oddworld

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 55 (February 2012)

OF THE YEAR!
AWARDS

HIGHWAY TO HELL

TWISTED METAL!

Strategies, vehicles, maps revealed!

+ Hideo Kojima on Metal Gear's past, present, and future

Future
MEDIA WITH PASSION

A HERO UNMASKED.

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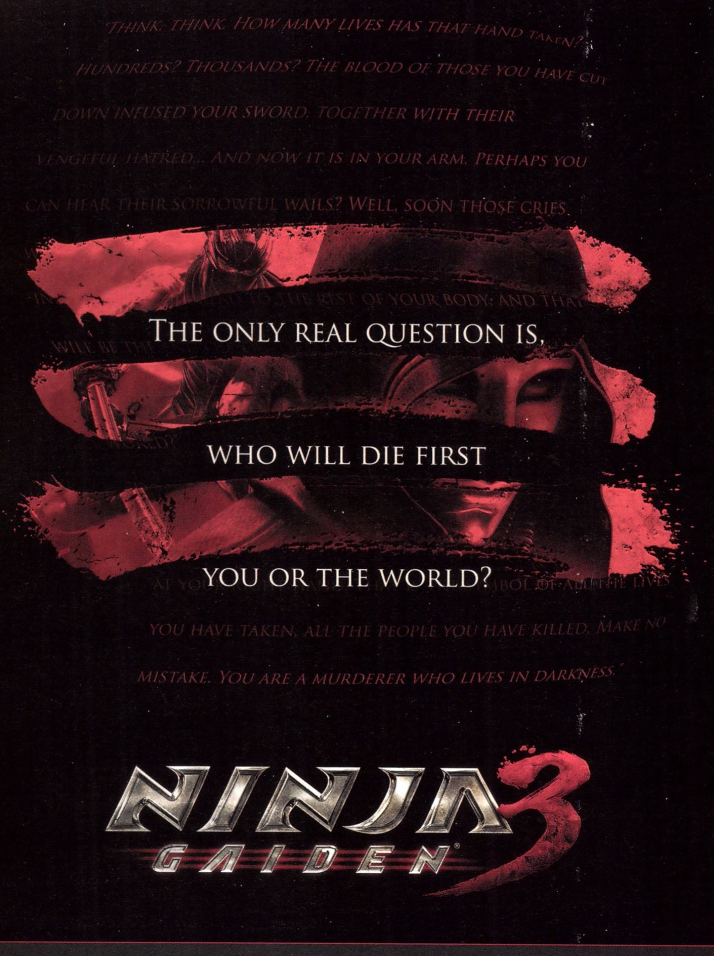
"THINK. THINK. HOW MANY LIVES HAS THAT HAND TAKEN?
HUNDREDS? THOUSANDS? THE BLOOD OF THOSE YOU HAVE CUT
DOWN INFUSED YOUR SWORD. TOGETHER WITH THEIR
VENGEFUL HATRED... AND NOW IT IS IN YOUR ARM. PERHAPS YOU
CAN HEAR THEIR SORROWFUL WAILS? WELL, SOON THOSE CRIES
THE ONLY REAL QUESTION IS,
WHO WILL DIE FIRST
YOU OR THE WORLD?
YOU HAVE TAKEN. ALL THE PEOPLE YOU HAVE KILLED. MAKE NO
MISTAKE. YOU ARE A MURDERER WHO LIVES IN DARKNESS."
NINJA GAIDEN 3

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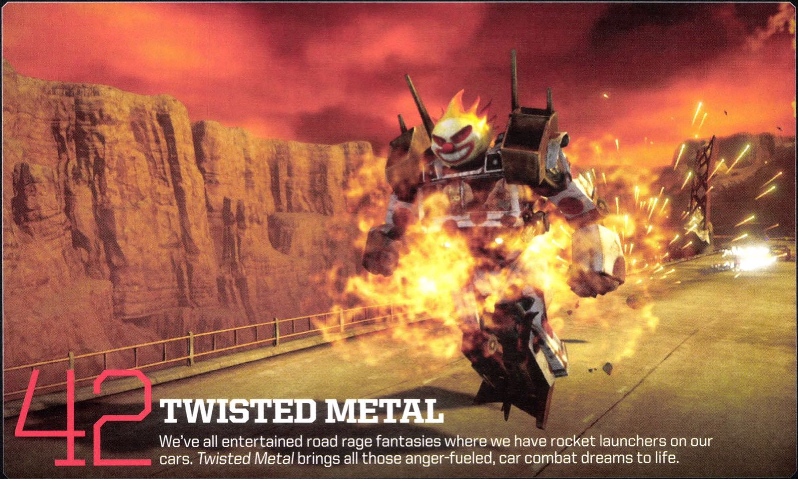
COVER FEATURE



42 TWISTED METAL

We've all entertained road rage fantasies where we have rocket launchers on our cars. *Twisted Metal* brings all those anger-fueled, car combat dreams to life.

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80 FINAL FANTASY XIII-2

Time travel, monster pets, and clothes that make no sense, oh my! *Final Fantasy* is back.

Perfectly flawed

A great game with an even greater problem

One of the challenging aspects of creating a print magazine is that we exist in an alternate timeline. The timeliness of our editorial coverage can be hugely affected by when a game arrives in relation to our long-lead deadline.

Such was the case with our recent review of *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (issue 54). As anticipated, we were swept away by the game's incredibly detailed and compelling fantasy world. It's a stunning RPG that unquestionably deserved our 10 rating. And then, about a day after the issue had shipped, we began to hear about lag issues on PS3...

It's a problem that didn't manifest itself during our reviewer's playtest (although he played beyond the 30-hour threshold when the bug reportedly appears), but one that staff editor Ryan Taljonick later encountered during a personal playthrough.

There's been much speculation about the cause of the lag (large save files, PS3 memory management), and Bethesda has been busy investigating and issuing patches. We're hopeful that the issue will ultimately be resolved, but there's no absolute fix as of this column's writing.

It's a strange place to be: in between reveling in a brilliant game experience and anticipating the arrival of a real solution. But perhaps most curious is that we still love *Skyrim* despite its imperfection. In fact, take a peek at this issue's Game of the Year awards to see how highly we still regard it.

But the big issue here is the current standard of post-release tweaking. What's a reasonable wait for a patch? What about *Skyrim* owners without online access? What if there is no fix? Bethesda *must* provide answers for questions the whole industry is struggling with. It's an unenviable position to be in, and a situation that can't be fixed with a mere band-aid.

Roger Burchill
Editor in Chief
twitter.com/RogerPTOM

Ken Bousquet
Art Director
twitter.com/ArtKenPTOM

Ken Bousquet has a lifetime membership in the Rush fan club. He listens to "Working Man" very loud every morning as he downs two double espressos. His cat hates Rush.

Scott Butterworth
Associate Editor
twitter.com/ScottPTOM

While others listen to "mainstream" music, Scott Butterworth stands in favor of the little guys. That's why he likes U.N.I.T.Y. You've probably never heard of them.

Ryan Taljonick
Assistant Editor
twitter.com/RyanTaljonick

Ever the 'N Sync fanboy, Ryan Taljonick begins every work day by standing in the middle of the office and singing "It's Gonna Be Me." It's never him.

Anne Lewis
Editorial Intern
twitter.com/BDRAnneLewis

Anne Lewis was always a Hansen fan, though the only song of theirs she knows is "MMMBop." Coincidentally those are also the only words of the song she knows.

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EDITORIAL
Editor in Chief Roger Burchill
Associate Editor Scott Butterworth
Assistant Editor Ryan Taljonick
Editorial Intern Anne Lewis
Editorial Contributors Matt Cabral, Erick Ceil, Taylor Cocke, Jason D'Aprile, Russ Garbutt, Joel Gregory, Carolyn Gudmundson, Andrew Hayward, Carter Jung, Nathan Meunier, Mikel Reparaz, Evan Shamoon, David F. Smith

ART
Art Director Ken Bousquet
Designer Elizabeth Marken
Creative Director Chris Imlay

BUSINESS
Vice President, Consumer Media Kelley Corten
kcorten@futureus.com
Publisher Kristen Salvatore
ksalvatore@futureus.com
Vice President, Sales & Business Development Nate Hunt
nhunt@futureus.com
National Director of Sales Isaac Ugay
iugay@futureus.com
Regional Sales Manager Brandon Wong
brandonwong@futureus.com
Regional Sales Manager Stacy Gaines
sgaines@futureus.com
Regional Sales Manager Jen Doerger
jdoerger@futureus.com
Advertising Coordinator Heidi Hapin
hhapin@futureus.com

Marketing & Sales Development Director Rhoda Bueno
eCommerce & Fulfillment Director Lisa Radler
Consumer Marketing Director Stephanie Blake
Newsstand Director Bill Shewey

PRODUCTION
Production Director Michael Hollister
Production Manager Larry Briseno
Senior Production Coordinator Dan Mallory
Senior Print Order Coordinator Jennifer Lim

FUTURE US, Inc.
4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400
South San Francisco, CA 94080
(650) 872-1642
www.futureus.com

Chief Operating Officer Rachelle Considine
Vice President & CFO John Sutton
Vice President, Internet & Mobile Products Mark Kramer
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FUTURE PLC
30 Monmouth St., Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW, England
Tel +44 1225 442244
www.futureplc.com

Non-executive Chairman Peter Allen
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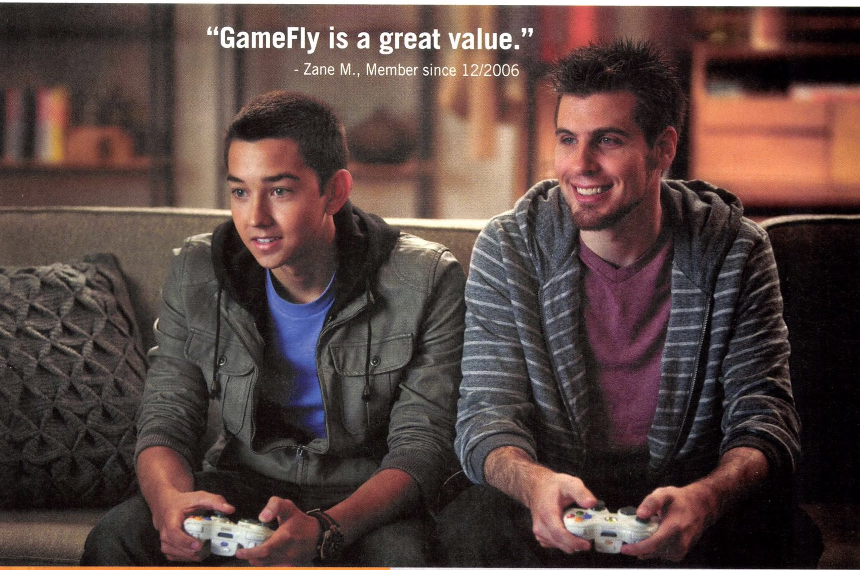
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qore

Presented by the PlayStation®Network

Inside Qore Episode 45

Two Great Tastes Together

Two big franchises collide in *Street Fighter X Tekken*. Capcom's Seth Killian punches us through the dozens of characters and endless possibilities in this two-on-two game. Teamwork also applies to shooters with *Binary Domain*; you get to pick a squad of AI agents to assist you through this story-driven action game. Then, travel back to one of non-fiction's great tales in *Birds of Steel*, a WWII combat flight-simulator where you can pilot 100 historically accurate planes. Finally, we take vehicle combat into the sci-fi, walker-robot future in *Armored Core V*.

JESSE BLAZE SNIDER HOST OF QORE

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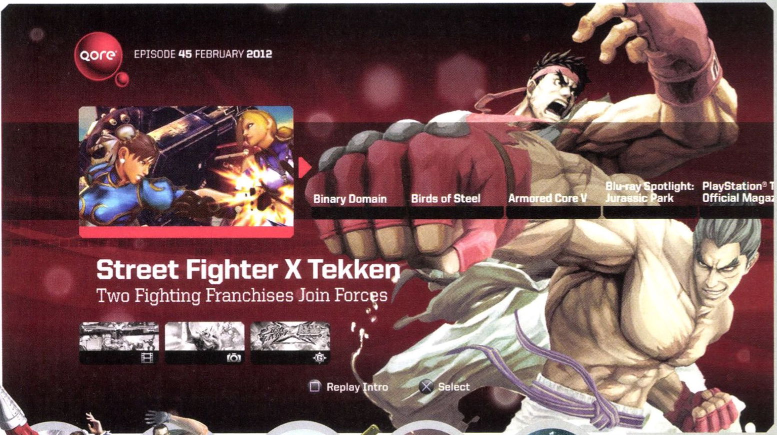
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EPISODE 45 FEBRUARY 2012
Binary Domain
Birds of Steel
Armored Core V
Blu-ray Spotlight: Jurassic Park
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Replay Intro
Select

Street Fighter X Tekken

Two Fighting Franchises Join Forces

Street Fighter X Tekken

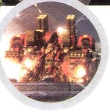
"Hadouken" meets "Electric Wind Godfist."

Binary Domain

Do androids dream of electric sheep?

Birds of Steel

History takes flight.



Armored Core V

Mech warriors battle for the future.

Blu-ray Spotlight

Jurassic Park roars in a new special edition.

Qore is free to PlayStation Plus subscribers.

Individual episodes can be purchased for $2.99 and a 13-episode subscription can be purchased for $24.99. Qore subscribers have access to Betas, demos, themes, and additional downloadable content each month.

CONTENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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Amazing app, and it's FREE!

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Thank you GamesRadar for
FEEDING MY
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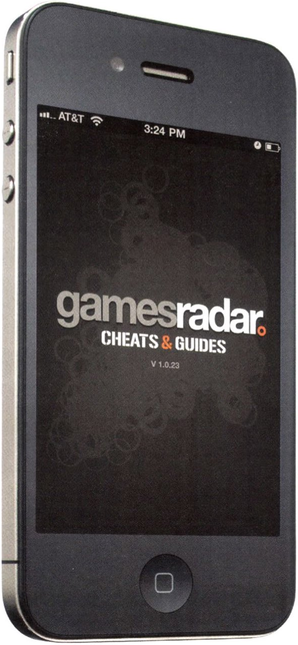

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by Marcello Almaguer

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The PlayStation Entertainment Plan

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MONDAY | **TUESDAY** | **WEDNESDAY** | **THURSDAY** | **FRIDAY** | **SATURDAY** | **SUNDAY**

FEB. 01

Naked Day
Every year we celebrate this day, and every year we have to find new jobs. Someday we'll learn.

02

Groundhog Day
Today a rodent will determine our seasonal future. Does no one have an issue with this?

05

Top Gun
Stephen W. Thompson was the first U.S. pilot to down an enemy airplane, on this day in 1918.

07

The Darkness is Closing In
The Darkness II is in stores today and we cannot wait to rip out people's hearts and eat them.

In stores:
Inversion

08

Roll the DICE
The annual DICE Summit—dedicated to exploring videogame innovation and advancement—is in Las Vegas celebrating its 11th conference starting today.

09

15th annual IAAs
Today the Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences will choose the best games of 2011 as well as induct a gaming icon into the Hall of Fame.

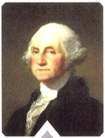
10

Indie FTW
The Indie Game Challenge Awards Ceremony is today. Last year, *Limbo* was the winner in the "professional" category. We can't wait to hear this year's winners.

INDIE GAME CHALLENGE

12

Sportsmanship
Back in 1949, Team Canada beat Denmark 47-0 in hockey. So nice of them to ease off after the 46th goal.



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Wheels of Love
Today is Valentine's Day but it's also the release of *Twisted Metal*. Our significant others will be taking the backseat while we blow sh–t up.

In stores:
Binary Domain

15th annual
interactive achievement awards

17

He's Back
Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance is in theaters; because after the first one the main thought on all our minds was, "I want to watch two more hours of that."

20

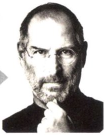
President's Day
We're celebrating the hard work and dedication of Washington and Lincoln by being super lazy and not leaving our house. This is how we express our freedoms.

21

Mardi Gras
It's Mardi Gras and we want to see some boo...ks about the history of this classy and elegant festival.

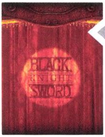
24

Steve Jobs' Birthday
Steve Jobs passed away last year after his pancreatic cancer relapsed. He would have been only 57 today.



26

Jean-ius
Levi Strauss, German-born clothing designer was born on this day in 1829. Without him, we'd be pantsless as we type this.



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Fear the Black Knight
Grasshopper Manufacture releases *Black Knight Sword* today: a bizarre, gory, hack-'n'-slash puppet show.

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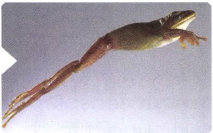
Leap Year
Much like our joy, Leap Year comes only once every four years. Also like our joy, it is predictable and nothing exciting.



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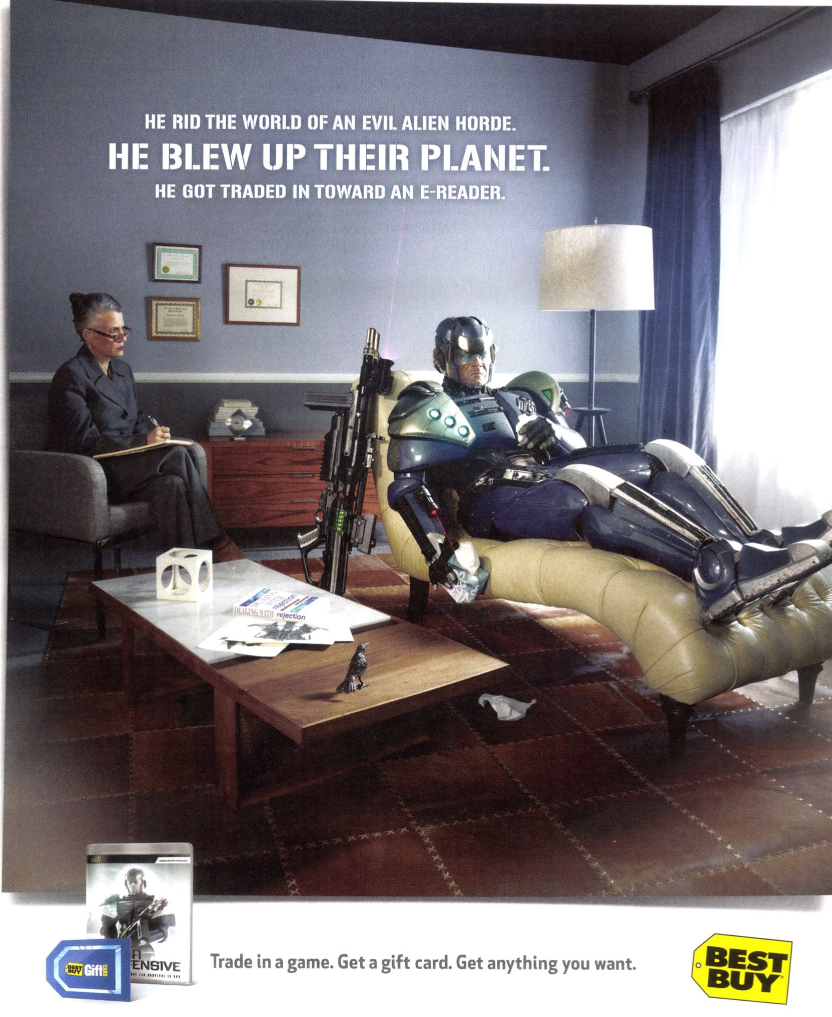
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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

The Last of Us
We break down the info on Naughty Dog's new IP.

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Tablet Rasa
The secrets of the PlayStation Tablet are revealed.

⏩Page 16

On the Trail
Find out what elements are essential to a good game trailer.

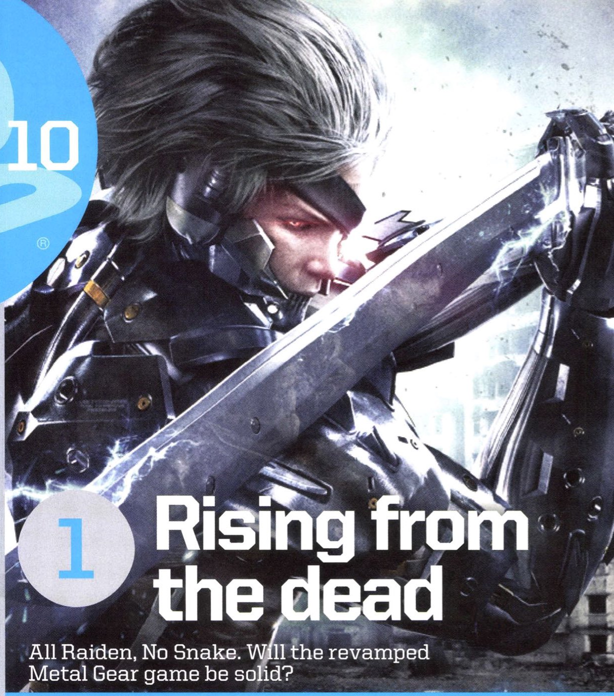
⏩Page 17

Tony Hawk HD
Our favorite skating franchise gets an HD cleanup.

⏩Page 18

The Great Debate
PTOM eds ponder: Are post-release patches killing console gaming?

⏩Page 20



1 Rising from the dead

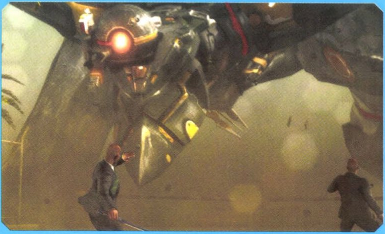
All Raiden, No Snake. Will the revamped Metal Gear game be solid?

Metal Gear Solid: Rising, the game formally announced at E3 2009, is dead...as in done, no mas, kaput. From the ashes of Kojima Productions rises *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*—a new title sans the "Solid", plus a clever word fusion and a whole new studio charged with development.

Prior to the changing of the guards, the game starring sword-wielding Raiden was all but canceled. Hideo Kojima, who was working on *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker* at the time, left development of the ill-fated *Metal Gear Solid: Rising* to his juniors. The studio behind the slew of wildly successful games found that balancing suspense-building stealth with high-octane action was trickier than anticipated.

Enter PlatinumGames. A fledgling studio based in Osaka, Platinum's roots stem back to Capcom's Clover Studio, the now-defunct developers behind the critically acclaimed *Viewtiful Joe* and *Okami*. With glowing reviews for *Bayonetta* and *Vanquish*, Kojima found a Japanese developer who was familiar with the style of gaming *Rising* needed: hyper, over-the-top hack-'n'-slash action. Although *Metal Gear* purists may groan, Hideo Kojima and PlatinumGames producer Atsushi Inaba both assert the new *Metal Gear* will still carry some of the franchise's signature stealth elements. Inaba-san is a game-producing legend in his own right and a huge fan of the *Metal Gear* series. He also understands the core of its popularity, which means that cutscenes and storyline will be paramount to *Revengeance*.

With Platinum taking over development in early 2011, perhaps the greatest testament to Kojima's faith in the new studio is the amount of latitude he granted. It's an entirely new game. Take the timeline of *Revengeance*, for example. Initially, under Kojima Productions, the game was to fall in between *MGS2* and *MGS4*, both titles where Raiden, the ninja-like Special Forces character, makes his androgynous cameo. Wedging the story between



the two *Solids* however, confined the plot. Now, the story's been pushed after the happenings in *MGS4*, opening up new possibilities for Raiden.

Cutting Ties

Another significant change is the engine. PlatinumGames was able to switch the game from the stealth-inclined Fox engine to a more action-friendly one (think *Bayonetta*). Platinum also got around Kojima Productions' development problem of creating a world that could be sliced and diced by Raiden's katana. How? By removing the feature. Enemies can still be cut into bloody chunks like vegetables in a Slap Chop operated by meth-addicts, but not everything in the environment. This way, Platinum can focus on what they're good at, which is a fast-paced action game with great playability—as evidenced in the preview trailer that has Raiden fending off an attack from Metal Gear Ray, lobbing it up into the air like a beach ball and jumping up after it, finally slicing through the giant mech like a stub-nosed katana cuts through soft tofu.

That doesn't mean Kojima Productions is completely hands-off of the project. Liaisons have been assigned for consulting, and the Tokyo-based Kojima group often visits Platinum's Osaka studio in the Kansai region—coincidentally, the same region where Hideo Kojima grew up in, following his birth in Tokyo. Atsushi Inaba, in charge of production at Platinum, jokes that Kojima Productions is "demanding" and a "bunch of tough bastards"—qualities any videogame developer worth their salt should have.

So what's the verdict on the new *Metal Gear*? It's still too early to tell. The game is unapologetically different from what we've come to know and love about the series. The change in developers and the "Solid" being dropped from the title are clear indicators of such. With less sulking in the shadows and a lot more frenetic killing, this is a game meant for people enamored with the *Metal Gear* world who are looking for a new experience. Count us in.

Atsushi Inaba (pictured right), in charge of production at Platinum, jokes that Kojima Productions is "demanding" and a "bunch of tough bastards."

Photography: Carter Jung

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

2 Who will be the next Lara Croft?

The third Tomb Raider movie needs a new first lady

Taking all bets! What are you willing to wager on Gemma Arterton filling Angelina Jolie's archaeologist boots for the newly announced *Tomb Raider* film. Or what about Megan Fox? She could probably manage a passable British accent (or not). Regardless of which Hollywood starlet bags the part of the PlayStation icon, the movie's producer is describing it as a "character study."

In an interview with comingsoon.net, GK Films' Graham King talks about wanting to reboot Lara's silver-screen series. "It's something very different," he says. "I find it interesting that the story we're telling is set before she became Lara Croft. It has a lot of great characters, but it's also a lot of action and a lot of fun."

While there's been no concrete casting news yet, *Tron: Legacy's* Olivia Wilde has already denied rumors that she's been offered the part. At least *Iron Man* writers Mark Fergus and Hawk Ostby have signed on for the project, meaning Lara's new script should rock slightly more pathos than an episode of *Gossip Girl*.

The 36-year-old Angelina Jolie is too "old" to reprise her role for a *Tomb Raider* prequel, sadly.

Jolie out!

Likely Lara stars

9/1

Olga Kurylenko By our "definitely not made up" odds, the stunning former Bond girl could be a decent choice.

7/1

Jessica Biel *The Illusionist* actress has already proven she can do a posh English accent, so she might be in the running.

3/1

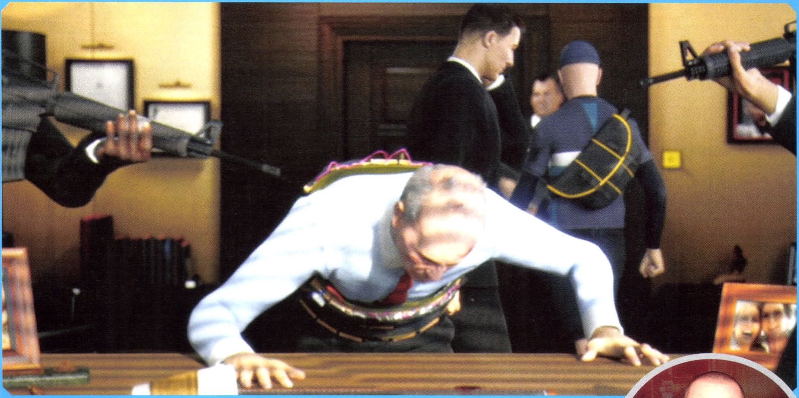
Gemma Arterton Starred in *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*, UK-born Arterton is practically a no-brainer.

4/1

Megan Fox She might be to acting what Godzilla is to Japanese diplomacy, but she's mega-hot nonetheless.

14/1

Mila Kunis Having just started to bag lead roles after her performance in *Black Swan*, Kunis may have a shot.



3 Pushing buttons

Rainbow 6: Patriots' designer Phil Therien on the game's controversial new direction

Talk about the main villain, Jonah Tredway, and his terrorist cell, the True Patriots.

The True Patriots are everybody. They are your neighbors. They are schoolteachers. They're a group of people who have gotten to a point where they feel so strongly that things need to change they are willing to take up arms. This isn't something that would happen on its own. This takes somebody very charismatic to incite this kind of change. Tredway is sort of that catalyst. When we look at things that are happening today, like Occupy Wall Street, it's a mostly peaceful protest and it's very well handled. There are always a few radicals that will go there and pick a fight with the cops, throw some rocks, burn a car. It happens. So what if somebody managed to organize those guys and get a little bit of result—enough to incite others? The Patriots are a snowball that's just gathering more and more momentum.

We know we'll be playing parts of the game as civilians, or even as the True Patriots—why this change in perspective?

You literally may play a mission where a True Patriot makes a big effort to save this woman and you go, "Wow, that's impressive. He went to huge lengths." Then as a Rainbow you have him in your crosshairs right after and you're like, "I should kill him because he's an enemy combatant and has taken up arms against my government, but he's not an animal." He's just a guy who wants change and he felt strongly enough that he picked up a rifle. That makes you think. Who's good and who's bad? That sort of blurry line, that's exactly where the Patriots are. They're not evil. They're just people who decided it was time for change.

Speaking of blurring lines, *Patriots* has heavy parallels to what we face in the U.S. today.

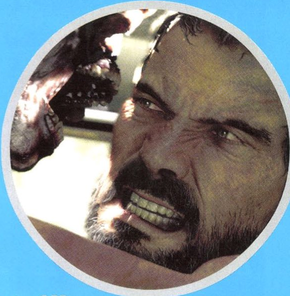
Well, I hope that people will recognize we're telling a story. We're not saying that these people are right or wrong. We're saying that it's something that could happen, and here's what would most likely happen, and let's make it a game. If people see it as a story, I think it will be very interesting because it will be the first time that a videogame just tells a timely story that's very relevant to all of us.

Are you nervous of backlash?

Videogames just have not been able to talk about mature subjects. We can't talk about sexuality and we can't talk about current events without being branded as extremists and terrorist supporters. I was really tired of that. We always seem to tone it down just so we don't have to deal with the critics. Let's push the boundaries. Let's take a stand. Let's say it's time to do mature stuff. We're going to treat it with respect. We're not going to try to pick sides. We're just going to say we're telling a story. Movies have been able to do that. The music industry does that. Why not games?

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



4

The fungus among us

Three facts about Naughty Dog's The Last of Us

Naughty Dog is pretty adamant their new game will change the industry with its unparalleled storytelling.

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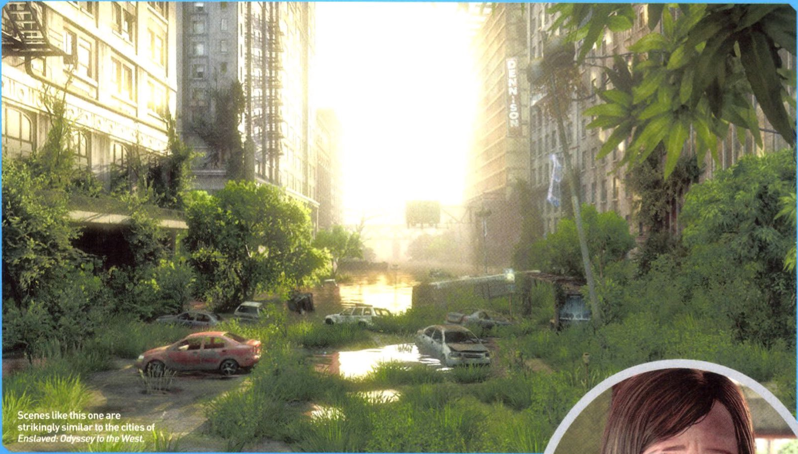


Scenes like this one are strikingly similar to the cities of *Enslaved: Odyssey to the West.*

Ever heard of Cordyceps fungus? No? We hadn't either, until we started seeing teaser clips for Naughty Dog's new game, *The Last of Us*. It turns out Cordyceps is a real-life "mind control" fungus that embeds its spores within a host (typically insects) before taking complete control of the creature's brain and movement. Eventually, the host dies and a fruiting body sprouts from its corpse, causing additional spores to spread.

Now, Cordyceps doesn't affect humans—but what if it did? What if it infected a heavily populated area and spread through the world, turning human beings into mindless, fungi-infected zombie things? Sounds pretty scary, right? Yeah, that's *The Last of Us*, slated for a late 2012 or early 2013 release date. Suddenly, the title sounds very appropriate.

The Premise

Everything we've seen about the game thus far indicates that humanity has been more or less wiped out by a modern-day plague caused by a hostile fungus. Civilization has been overrun with vegetation, suggesting the outbreak occurred several years prior to the game itself. Our two lead characters are Ellie, a teenage woman who looks eerily similar to actress Ellen Page, and Joel, a middle-aged survivor who has been described by Naughty Dog as "vicious."

We know from the reveal trailer the pair must defend themselves from other human survivors who are scavenging for supplies, as well as infected people who have been reduced to zombie-like monsters with spore-like growths protruding from their bodies. It all has a very *I Am Legend* vibe. As for the gameplay itself, all we know is *The Last of Us* is a third-person game with player views similar to *Uncharted*. However, Naughty Dog is pretty adamant their new game will change the industry with its unparalleled storytelling. We're really hoping it focuses on survival—about human beings adapting to a terrifying, oppressive world in which mankind no longer belongs. If there's a studio that can pull this off, Naughty Dog is it.

The Unveiling

When *The Last of Us* was first announced, we had very little information about it—even the game's developer was a mystery. All we had to go on was a brief 32-second video teaser on the game's website; the first 15 seconds showcased short clips of what was eventually discovered to be a segment on Cordyceps fungus from the BBC/Discovery series *Planet Earth*. And so the rumor mill started churning. Shortly after, images from *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception* appeared on the Internet highlighting a newspaper found on the bar counter during the game's opening sequence. The headline? "Scientists are still struggling to understand deadly fungus." This turned out to be more than a mere coincidence—Naughty Dog was subsequently confirmed as the game's developer during the VGAs.

The Team

With the creators of the beloved *Uncharted* series hard at work on *The Last of Us*, PlayStation gamers have every right to be pumped. But here's the thing—the new title has been in development for the past two years. It was revealed Naughty Dog has two development teams, which means *The Last of Us* was in development parallel to *Uncharted 3*. Steering the ship is creative director Neil Druckmann and game director Bruce Straley, the lead designer and game director of *Uncharted 2*, respectively. It has also been confirmed Mark Richard Davies, the lead designer of *Enslaved: Odyssey to the West*, is playing a large role in the game's development as well—and it shows. The brief clips we've seen of the game's eerily empty cities rife with plant life have very strong parallels to the same powerful imagery we saw in *Enslaved*. There are some top tier names involved in the creation of *The Last of Us*, and we couldn't be more excited.

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

5 PlayStation tabulous

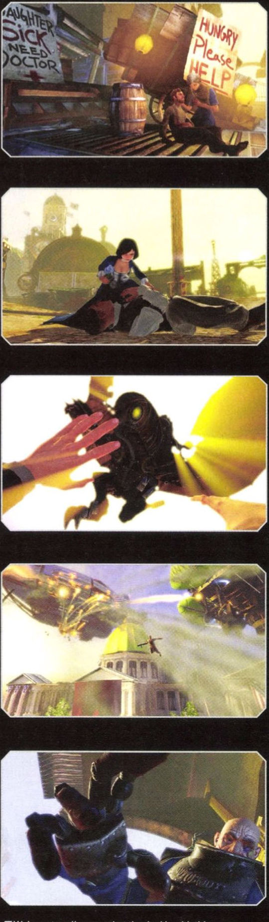
We go hands-on with Sony's PlayStation-certified Tablet S

Tablet computers have exploded in popularity recently, but the Tablet S—Sony's first foray into the field—stands out in a crowd thanks to its asymmetrical design, which bulks up one end for better grip and improved visibility on flat surfaces. The Tablet S runs on the Android operating system and delivers many of the expected amenities, including a vibrant touchscreen interface, web browser, front and back cameras for video chat, and access to the Android Market, where we can download games like *Angry Birds* and *Minecraft Pocket Edition*, along with other non-gaming apps.

However, one notable difference that the Tablet S has above other competitors is the ability to download and play classic PSone games from the PlayStation Store. The Tablet S actually ships with a couple familiar titles: PSone platforming smash *Crash Bandicoot*, and PSP original *Pinball Heroes*, which has been adapted for the device with the ability to play all eight tables (including those inspired by *Uncharted* and *MotorStorm*) by tapping either side of the screen to control the respective bumpers.

The PlayStation Store offers several more free and premium PSone re-releases, including *Cool Boarders*, *Jet Moto*, *Jumping Flash!*, and *Wild Arms*, all of which utilize virtual button and D-pad overlays that provide the full array of necessary controls. Games that rely on precise inputs—like *Crash Bandicoot* and *Hot Shots Golf 2*—suffer a bit on the touchscreen, but racers work admirably and make up a large portion of the current offerings.

We wouldn't advise buying a Tablet S just for classic PSone games, since they're also available on PSP and PS3—but if you're eyeing a tablet purchase, the warm glow of these retro favorites might help sway your decision. The Tablet S is available in 16GB and 32GB versions priced $499.99 and $599.99, respectively.



■ We're not really sure what the deal is with this giant, steampunk robot man. He doesn't look all that friendly though.

6

Trailer etiquette

The dos and don'ts of creating a compelling game trailer

Developers, we need to have a talk. Gamers love trailers, and we here at PTOM are no exception. The slick presentation, the subtle teasers, the cliffhanger endings—everything about them excites our inner-nerd. But there's a problem: too many trailers these days don't follow a few basic guidelines and end up feeling empty, confusing, or worst of all, misleading. Nobody wants that, least of all you, the creators of these games. So for the sake of truth, justice, and science, we've taken the most recent *BioShock Infinite* trailer (which is spectacular) and laid out our case for what really makes an effective teaser.

Do: Use actual gameplay footage
Don't: Rely entirely on CGI that will never appear in the game

The number one thing *BioShock Infinite's* most recent trailer does right: real gameplay footage that clearly depicts the actual experience. In this case, we get to see skyhooks, first-person shooting, and tons of crazy people. We can't wait to play it ourselves!

Do: Pick music that makes a statement
Don't: Force us to listen to cheesy hard rock because it's "extreme"

The whole "sad song juxtaposed with violent imagery" card has been played many times, but in this particular instance, it really works—not only because the song is beautiful but because it was actually written around the same time the events of the game take place. Gotta love that attention to detail.

Do: Highlight the game's strongest and most defining attributes
Don't: Try to dazzle us with meaningless explosions and flashy camera work

The *BioShock* trailer also does an excellent job of displaying the game's strengths without giving everything away. The steampunk-looking robot at the end, for example, captures everything that makes the game so unique, yet he's only on screen for a second. That's just long enough to whet our appetites.

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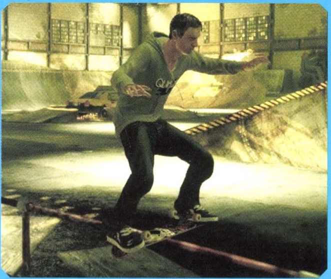
The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

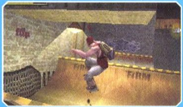


7 Back on board

We scrutinize the Tony Hawk series' past to save its future

Woodpushers of the world, prepare yourselves: *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD* will be dropping on PSN this summer. Unfortunately, all we know so far is that this budget-priced PSN download will combine the first two *THPS* games, which leaves a lot of questions unanswered. Are later gameplay additions like reverts and transfers out? What about custom skate parks?

As much as we love the original buttonmashing arcade gameplay of the first two games, we've decided not to leave anything to chance. In order to outline what we want to see (and more importantly, want to see avoided) in the upcoming HD re-release, we decided to chart the progress of the *Tony Hawk* franchise and pull out the defining aspect of each game.



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater

(PSone, 1999) With "gap" bonuses, special tricks, real pro skaters, and a near perfect soundtrack, it nailed every aspect of the extreme sports genre.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

(PSone, 2000) Manuals. The addition of this one trick opened up a new world of combos and lines. We weren't wild about the cash upgrade system, though.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3

(PS2, 2001) Reverts, like manuals, allowed players to throw down the craziest combos yet, and the game's online play was revolutionary...for the time.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4

(PS2, 2002) *THP4* did away with Career mode's two-minute time limit, turning *Tony Hawk* into an open-world game. We'd love to see this in *Tony Hawk HD*.

Tony Hawk's Underground

(PS2, 2003) Attempting a narrative-driven Career mode was bold, but the cheesy story and ability to step off the board distracted from the core gameplay.

Tony Hawk's Underground 2

(PS2, 2004) At this point, the series needed a break. Instead, it got Bam Margera, and the game turned into a boring, sophomoric brofest.

Tony Hawk's American Wasteland (PS2, 2005) Though this game stitched every level into one giant, skate-able world (sort of), the lack of gameplay upgrades made it feel like filler.

Tony Hawk's Project 8

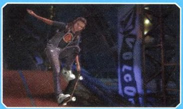
(PS3, 2006) The first *Tony Hawk* built for next-gen consoles, this one added the awesome slow-motion "nail the trick" mechanic. We wouldn't mind that in *HD*.

Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam (PS2, 2006) The "me too" port of a mediocre Wii game, this title focused more on racing than tricking and is probably best forgotten.

Tony Hawk's Proving Ground (PS3, 2007) Rigger, Career, or Hardcore: which kind of skater are you? While the idea of selecting a class was novel, it couldn't live up to *Project 8*.

Tony Hawk: Ride

(PS3, 2009) Skateboard peripheral. Bad idea. Ditching the classic gameplay was a bad move to begin with, but the software didn't even function well.



Tony Hawk: Shred

(PS3, 2010) While the software was a definite improvement over *Ride*, the whole skateboard controller idea was a bust. We pray it's not compatible with *Tony Hawk HD*.

8 Mission completion

How many gamers finished 2011's most popular titles?

Now that 2012 is upon us, we finally have a chance to catch up on our staggering backlog of games—especially considering just how many huge releases 2011 brought. Then we got to thinking: with such a plethora of titles available, how many PS3 owners actually finished the games they started? To find out, we turned to social gaming service Raptr.com, which totals the percentage of Trophies unlocked by PS3 owners who also use the free service. With more than 11 million users across all platforms, Raptr afforded us some pretty interesting completion rate statistics for 2011's biggest games.

Completion Percentages

61.05%

ARKHAM CITY

54.72%

UNCHARTED 3

52.96%

52.46%

DEAD SPACE 2

47.74%

MASS EFFECT 2

46.22%

CALL OF DUTY MW3

42.1%

38.99%

SAINTS ROW THE THIRD

38.89%

DEUS EX HUMAN REVOLUTION

37.48%

ASSASSIN'S CREED REVELATIONS

35.08%

BATTLEFIELD 3

34.21%

15.99%

RESISTANCE 3

15.07%

12.81%

DRAGON AGE II

9.18%

9 The Readers' Most Wanted

The *Final Fantasy* fanatics were out in force during our latest survey, eagerly awaiting the imminent *XIII-2* and the distant *XIV Online*. The newest addition to the *Rainbow 6* franchise also hopped onboard, and after a couple months of absence *Twisted Metal* reappears and jumps straight to number three. *Risen 2*, our surprise entry, maintains its spot, and the latest *Metal Gear* is still present and adorned with its new name.

01 *Final Fantasy XIII-2*
02 *Final Fantasy XIV Online*
03 *Twisted Metal*
04 *Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City*
05 *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*
06 *BioShock Infinite*
07 *DmC: Devil May Cry*
08 *Street Fighter X Tekken*
09 *SoulCalibur V*
10 *Max Payne 3*
11 *NFL Blitz*
12 *Silent Hill HD Collection*
13 *Silent Hill: Downpour*
14 *Risen 2: Dark Waters*
15 *Hitman: Absolution*
16 *Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time*
17 *Tom Clancy's Rainbow 6: Patriots*
18 *Ninja Gaiden 3*
19 *Far Cry 3*
20 *Mass Effect 3*

METAL GEAR RISING: REVENGEANCE

RAINBOW 6: PATRIOTS

Stats in this chart appear courtesy of Ipsos OTX MediaCT's GamePlan Insights. All games are PS3 titles. Polling period was November 27, 2011 to December 10, 2011.

10 Are post-release patches ruining console gaming?

The art of mending the broken versus breaking the future

Yes
Says the concerned consumer
Ryan Taljonick

Anne, I already know what you're thinking. Yes, patches let developers fix bugs after a game has launched, and yes, this is a good thing. It's silly to expect a game to hit retail shelves with absolutely zero issues. Considering just one mistake in all those lines of code can throw things off, I can't realistically demand perfection. But I can demand that my games be *playable* when I drop $60 on them.

Case in point: *Skyrim*. I love that game to pieces. But man was I pissed when I hit that 30-hour mark and it transformed from a living, breathing world to a chugging, unplayable mess. Oh, but don't worry, Bethesda will patch it and make everything better. Or will they? My game still stutters to the point where I frequently give up out of frustration. And even *if* a patch fixes it all, that doesn't forgive the fact this issue was either overlooked or ignored. And what about gamers with no Internet access? They're just left in the dust wishing they hadn't wasted their hard-earned money.

I'm sure the developers aren't really the bad guys here—I'd wager the tight deadlines their publishers force upon them have a large role to play in a game's launch stability. But when we're forced to rely on post-release patches to enjoy the games we pay for, I start getting nervous about the future of console gaming. The "release now, fix later" mentality is a lose-lose situation for everyone.

No
Says the forgiving intern
Anne Lewis

I have always been a believer in second chances; just look at my defense of *Fallout: New Vegas* back in issue 40. True, a game should be prepared for its launch, but we as consumers should respect the fact that sometimes a developer has no control over the release because a publisher wants it on shelves yesterday. Some games just need a little more time in the oven.

Skyrim is a prime example of why patches are not a detriment to games. What a gem, right? Like all gems it needs a little polishing. Sometimes when you buy a ring (or something super manly if you don't wear rings—I don't know, I'm a lady), you don't notice it has a serious flaw until you're, say, 30 hours into "wearing" it.

It sucks when a game is rushed out, but I would much rather it be patched post-release than be stuck with a crappy, half-finished game. Yes, you can say the game shouldn't be broken when it's sent out for public consumption but, with games ever more complex, it happens—and when it does, patches are a realistic means to deal with problems.

The concern that post-release patches might make developers lazy is valid, but it's more likely that they try their darnedest and games that require a little more work still get through. Face it, Ryan, the patch is an unavoidable, necessary part of the modern developer's tool kit.

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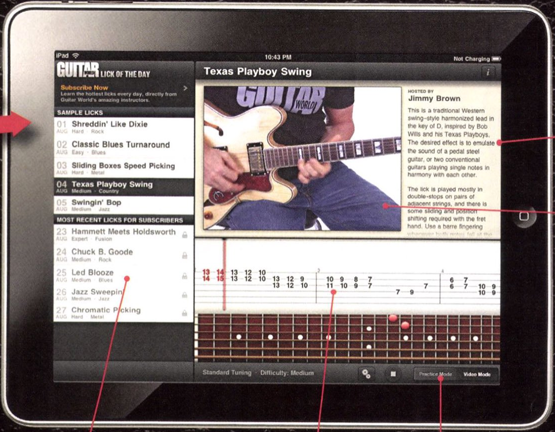

iPad 10:43 PM Not Charging

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26 Jazz Sweepin — AUG · Medium · Jazz
27 Chromatic Picking — AUG · Hard · Metal

Texas Playboy Swing

HOSTED BY
Jimmy Brown

This is a traditional Western swing-style harmonized lead in the key of D, inspired by Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. The desired effect is to emulate the sound of a pedal steel guitar, or two conventional guitars playing single notes in harmony with each other.

The lick is played mostly in double-stops on pairs of adjacent strings, and there is some sliding and position shifting required with the fret hand. Use a barre fingering

Standard Tuning · Difficulty: Medium

Performance notes written by GUITAR WORLD

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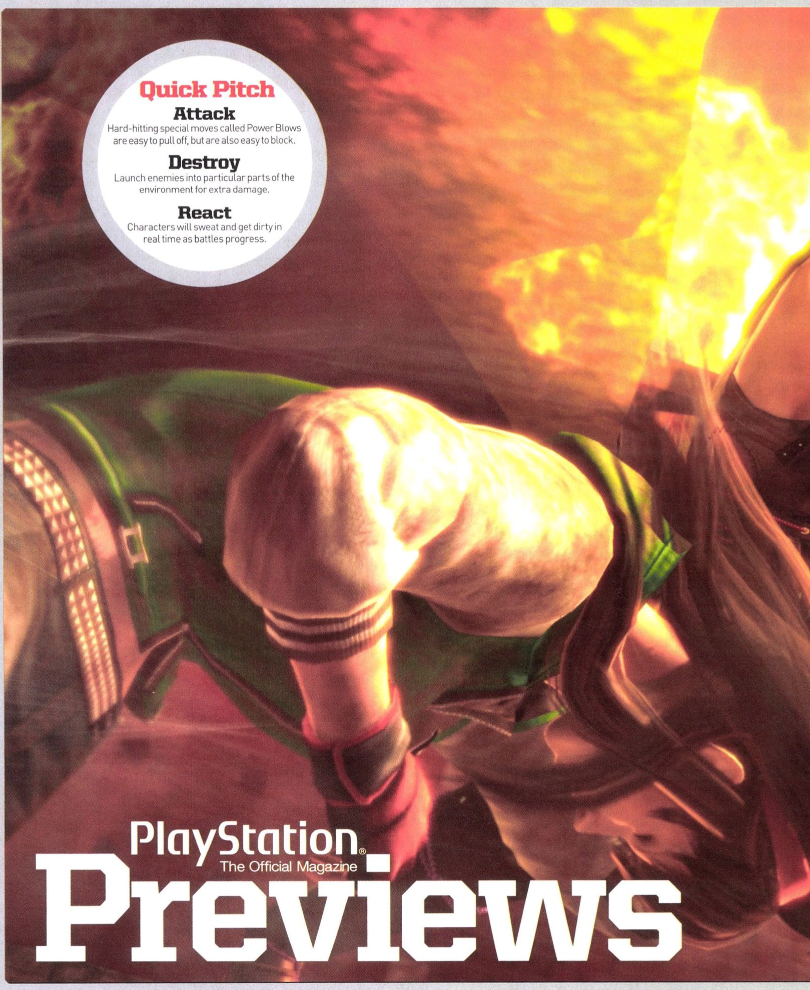


Quick Pitch

Attack

Hard-hitting special moves called Power Blows are easy to pull off, but are also easy to block.

Destroy

Launch enemies into particular parts of the environment for extra damage.

React

Characters will sweat and get dirty in real time as battles progress.

PlayStation® The Official Magazine

Previews

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **TDB 2012** Pub **Tecmo Koei** Dev **Team Ninja**

Dead or Alive 5

The beauty and the brawl

Ask anyone what the *Dead or Alive* fighting games are best known for and chances are they'll giggle and respond with one answer: boobs. Yeah, it's juvenile, but when it comes to *Dead or Alive*, there's no denying the over-the-top, uh... buoyancy...of the female characters' disproportionately large bosoms. We recently got a hands-on look at *Dead or Alive 5*, and yes, jiggle physics remain intact. More important, however, is the fact this marks the first return of the franchise to a PlayStation console (excluding PSP) in more than 11 years; and now that series creator Tomonobu Itagaki has left Team Ninja, *Dead or Alive* is heading in a new direction.

Fighting Entertainment

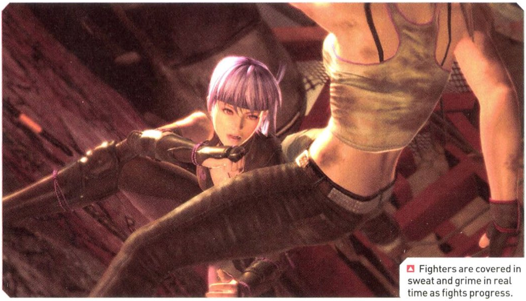
"Our biggest focus has been evolving our fighting series into what we are calling 'fighting entertainment,'" says Yosuke Hayashi, head of Team Ninja. "Fighting entertainment is the moment in the climax of an action film when a fight has escalated to its peak; it is the sweat and grime on a fighter, the enticing visual stimulation, and immersive story. Fighting entertainment is *Dead or Alive 5*."

Hayashi means this quite literally. After choosing Hitomi as our fighter (we could also choose from returners Hyabusa, Hayate, and Ayane), we squared off against our opponent atop a skyscraper still under construction. Not exactly the safest place for a fight, but it sure made for an interesting brawl. As we acclimated to the controls, we noticed Hitomi's physical appearance changed based on our actions. Pulling off a series of powerful combos meant sweat would pour from her skin, but when we were beaten to the ground, dirt clung to her body and clothing as she gasped for air. It all felt and looked very natural.

It was when we initiated a Power Blow that things started to get *really* interesting, though. These attacks have unique animations for each character and take a few seconds to charge up. They're just as simple to pull off as regular moves, and are blocked just as easily—but they temporarily freeze time if they connect. In this brief window, we could aim where our opponent would land after the attack connected; smashing them into parts of the environment often had devastating results. For example, we kicked a dude into a generator on top of the skyscraper, which exploded when he collided with it causing extra damage. In other cases, the environment itself can change completely. When we took a hard-hitting punch to the face, we plowed into a steel girder head-on, causing us to fall from the skyscraper and resume the fight on the streets ▸▸

Maybe fighting on top of a collapsing skyscraper wasn't exactly the best idea.

Hitomi and Ayane have both been confirmed as returning characters.



Fighters are covered in sweat and grime in real time as fights progress.

below. Hayashi says most environments will have destructive elements to them, each with their own unique flavor. Some stages, though, are built specifically for players who want to focus on pure fighting mechanics. As for Power Blows, hardcore fighting fans may find them off-putting at first, but Hayashi assures us they have nothing to fear.

"With the new Power Blow, we are moving away from the standard formula of a move that is difficult to pull off and hard to land. Instead, we are creating a more powerful move that is easier to pull off and thus will create an even more strategic experience between players in a fight, which we think will make the fight more interesting for a variety of different players. We are spending a lot of time with the Power Blow right now, actually, and trying to figure out how to create a harmonious balance." Considering we were playing an alpha version of the game, Team Ninja has plenty of time for fine-tuning the combat. As for the whole fighting entertainment part, well, we're sold.

RYAN TALJONICK

> We noticed Hitomi's physical appearance changed based on our actions.

Living in Paradise Lovely ladies we hope return in *Dead or Alive 5*

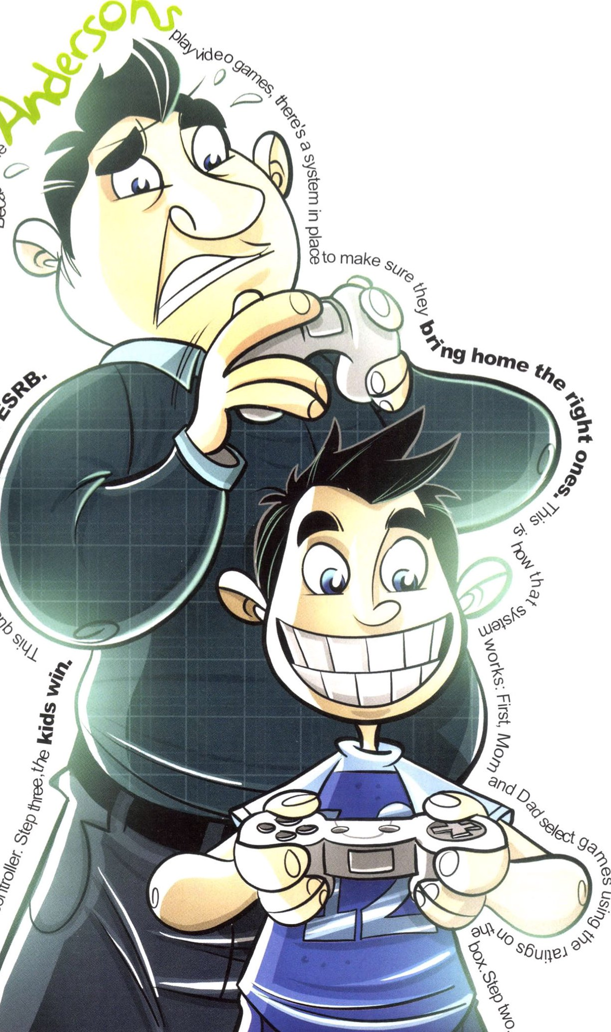
Christine

Helena Douglas

Kasumi

Kokoro

Lei Fang



Because the **Andersons** play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they **bring home the right ones.** This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Step two

everyone gets a controller. Step three, the **kids win.** This quality time is presented by the **ESRB.**

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

erved.

Quick Pitch

Darkness
The sandstorm that buried Dubai isn't the only tragedy to befall the city...

Squad Up
As the leader of a three-man squad, we don't have to go it alone.

Quick Sand
The desert can be an enemy or an ally. It just depends on who's getting buried alive.

What do you get when you cross a sandstorm with a shooter? Total blinding chaos.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **April** Pub **2K Games** Dev **Yager Development**

Spec Ops The Line

A journey into the heart of man

Two wriggling bodies hang from a freeway overpass. A team of snipers trains their rifles on our squad from further back on the highway. A stern voice crackles over the radio and informs us that one of the two human beings in front of us is going to die by our hand. We just have to choose which one. Will it be the man who stole water for his family or the soldier who killed that man's family as punishment?

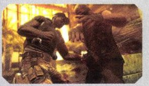
At first, we do nothing, not wanting to be extorted into murder. But this, of course, means the snipers go ahead and execute our entire squad. Reload, try again. This time we decide to go straight for the snipers, and while we ultimately manage to survive, the enemy kills both hostages in the ensuing firefight. It's only once we're forced to move forward that a developer leans in and tells us there's an option we hadn't considered: shoot the hostages' ropes.

This, in a nutshell, is *Spec Ops: The Line*, a decidedly dark third-person shooter that's more *Apocalypse Now!* than Michael Bay explosion-fest. As an apocalyptic sandstorm began to bury the opulent but isolated city of Dubai, decorated Colonel Konrad and his 33rd regiment initiated an emergency evacuation mission. Unfortunately, Konrad couldn't make it out in time, so now, months later, Captain Walker and

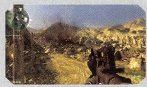
A Day at the Beach Five other shooters that feature sandy settings

Uncharted 3

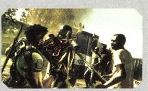
Army of Two The 40th Day



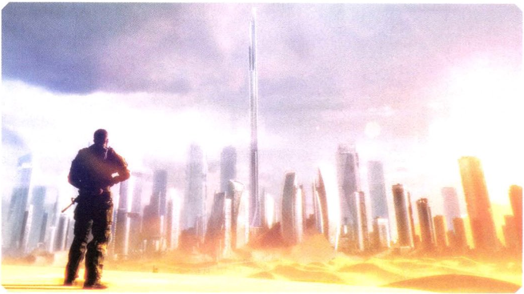
50 Cent Blood on the Sand

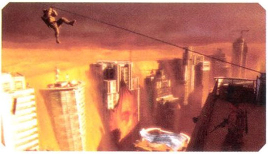


Medal of Honor



Resident Evil 5





Sand-covered Dubai contains everything from four-star hotels to toppled skyscrapers.

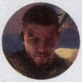
A dark third-person shooter that's more *Apocalypse Now!* than Michael Bay explosion-fest.

his two squadmates have been sent to seek out the troops. But instead of soldiers, they find mass graves, execution squads, and other unspeakable atrocities.

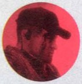
In contrast with the game's nuanced morality, the gameplay consists mainly of straightforward, linear, cover-based shooting. While it's by no means a military sim, cover is absolutely essential for survival, which means the pacing requires a bit of stop-and-pop patience. The game does, however, provide us with a few unique tools to alleviate any potential tedium. Pinned down by distant enemy snipers? Mark a target and command one of Walker's squadmates to take him out. Bad guys hanging out in front of a precariously sand-filled building? Shoot out a window to bury them beneath tiny little granules of death.

Sand actually plays a major role in *Spec Ops*, serving not only as a potential gameplay mechanic but as an unpredictable variable as well. At one point during our hands-on time, a fight under a freeway was suddenly enveloped by a sandstorm, forcing us to run blindly through it, stabbing enemies as they abruptly materialized in front of us. At another point, the earth seemed to swallow an entire enemy unit whole, but it turned out that beneath the sand lay a glass ceiling that shattered during our gunfight. Dubai, it seems, has plenty to hide. SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

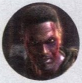
Cast List



Captain Martin Walker
Leader of the three-man squad sent to retrieve the lost 33rd battalion.



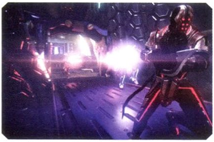
Sergeant John Lugo
The smart-mouthed sniper who's constantly cracking obnoxious jokes.



Lieutenant Alphonso Adams
A no-nonsense demolitions man who packs a mean punch.

Colonel John Konrad
The missing mentor who may have lost his mind in Dubai.

Could Be a Contender



Format **PSN** ETA **Q1** Pub **THQ** Dev **Illfonic**

Nexuiz

Back to the arena

The Premise

Nexuiz is a downloadable 4v4 arena FPS (think *Quake*) that runs on CryEngine 3. For the uninformed, that means it's super pretty.

The Reality

If the demo we played is any indication, *Nexuiz* is set to deliver awesome arena action. The gunplay felt tight and responsive, and it's one the sexiest PSN games we've ever seen.

The Hook

Each level contains Mutators—pick-ups that temporarily change the rules of a match. Some extend a match's score limit while others provide powerful weapons or abilities, and the effects can stack. There are 100 different Mutators, with over 1.7 million possible combinations.

The chances

After 2011's impressive line-up of shooters, we're feeling a bit burnt out. Maybe a fast-paced, arcadey arena FPS like *Nexuiz* is all we need to recharge the ol' batteries. Rocket jump, ahoy!

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **February** Pub **2K Games** Dev **Digital Extremes**

The Darkness II

A gangster's paradise

A Scotsman, witchdoctor, ninja, and a secret agent walk into a bar. Then... Well, there's no punch line—these odd characters are actually Jackie Estacado's henchmen and are the stars of *The Darkness II's* Vendettas multiplayer campaign. This co-op only mode sends us on team-based missions against the evil Brotherhood as one of four unique characters, each equipped with an elaborate backstory, a Darkness-powered weapon, and a sweet set of Darkness abilities perfect for obliterating Brotherhood agents.

In the mission we played, we were tasked with freeing a hostage from the clutches of the Brotherhood. We jumped in as the swordsman Inugami, who wields a cursed blade that consumes the souls of his victims. His most powerful attack? The Swarm power, which launches Darkness energy at enemies like an army of flesh-eating insects, causing extensive damage over time. The skills of the other characters complemented our team as a whole; the fearsome JP Dumond can use his Medicine Stick to lift enemies into the air, leaving them vulnerable to attack from sexy Shoshanna, a spec-ops agent with a nasty double-barreled shotgun. We sliced and shot our enemies to pieces, but Brotherhood troops became increasingly resilient to our attacks as we neared our objective. After a brutal death, we realized synergy is absolutely essential for survival. **RYAN TALJONICK**

The Scottish Jimmy Wilson's hobbies include: boozing, belching, and summoning Darklings to tear enemies to shreds.

Owning bad guys scores us Darkness Essence, points that can be used to upgrade the strength of our abilities.

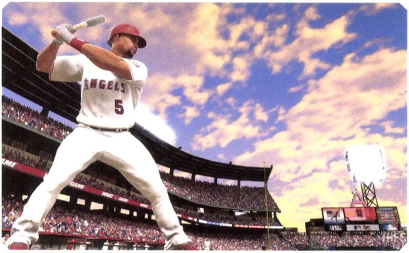
Being in brightly lit areas inhibit our Darkness powers—shooting out those pesky lights is crucial.

Inugami's sword is a powerful tool for destroying the cult-like Brotherhood.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **March** Pub **SCEA** Dev **SCE San Diego Studio**

MLB 12 The Show

Defending the championship



Annually released sports titles often struggle to significantly differentiate themselves not only from the competition, but from their earlier iterations. *MLB 12: The Show* is not sweating this problem. Despite receiving rave reviews for last year's entry, Sony San Diego sees plenty of room for the series' improvement.

The first thing that hit us during our hands-on demo was *MLB 12's* near-photorealistic presentation. The already stunning series is looking better than ever; natural camera cuts, 1000-plus new animations, and an across-the-board overhaul of all assets make it practically impossible to spot transitions from gameplay to cinematic and vice-versa.

Of course, for fans of America's favorite pastime, authentic gameplay always trumps pretty visuals. Enhanced ball physics means no more questionable momentum modeling, such as the cowhide unrealistically rolling on the turf, while better online balance ensures improved timing and interaction between batter and pitcher.

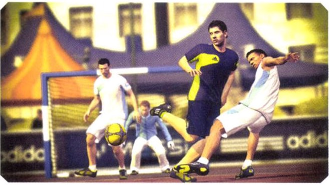
MLB 12's also upping its Move game. Where last year's version only supported Home Run Derby, *The Show's* next entry will allow fans to bat, pitch, field, and base run from behind the wand. Even cooler, especially for on-the-go hard-ballers, is seamless PS Vita integration; PS3 save files can be uploaded to the portable and back again, so games will have less commercial breaks than an ESPN broadcast. Whether behind a DualShock, Move, or Vita, its looks like baseball fans are in for a winning season. MATT CABRAL

▲ In addition to a number of visual upgrades, *MLB 12* will also feature more varied, real-time commentary.

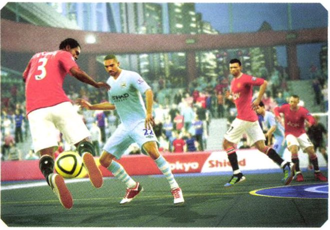
HANDS ON Format **PS3** ETA **March** Pub **EA Sports** Dev **EA Canada**

FIFA Street

Bicycle kicks on asphalt



▲ There's nothing more satisfying than totally burning a friend on a paved pitch. Besides letting him hear about it afterwards...



▲ We imagine that street ballin' in soccer is more about fancy footwork than sound fundamentals. We're okay with that.

Why bother with a flaming soccer ball when our skills are already on fire? That's what the reboot of the *FIFA Street* series is all about. Gone are the ridiculous powerups and arcade action, and in their place, crazy ball-handling skills and highly improbable goals.

Borrowing the flick-stick mechanic from the more traditional *FIFA* games and expanding upon it, *Street* sets out to give us tons of control over the ball as we struggle to get it up and down the tiny, enclosed fields. Simple taps of the Right-stick result in spin moves, insane dribbles, and occasional nutmegs (dribbling through an opponent's legs, for those not versed in soccer lingo) that are enough to get any seasoned pro snapping fingers in approval. Holding L2 while toying with the stick leads to solitary moves and tricks, setting up some potentially embarrassing moments for would-be defenders. Scoring a goal after schooling several adversaries feels fluid and is enormously satisfying.

By their very nature, street soccer games are rarely played in the same place. They also rarely follow the same rules. So to match those characteristics, *FIFA Street* offers several different modes and maps to play on. Hop in a basic 3v3 game on a playground, or get crazy with a 6v6 match in Last Man Standing, in which a player is removed from the game each time a goal is scored. It's chaotic, tense, and above all, super fun. Who says we need lightning shoes to have a good time? TAYLOR COCKE

FINAL FANTASY XIII-2

CHANGE THE FUTURE

In FINAL FANTASY XIII, the world of Cocoon floated safely in the sky, its inhabitants completely sealed away in a technological utopia isolated from the untamed wilderness of the planet Pulse below. Despite their longstanding separation, heroes from both worlds were suddenly brought together when godlike beings called fal'Cie sought to bring Cocoon crashing violently down on Pulse. Serah was branded as a l'Cie, a servant forced to do the bidding of the fal'Cie or die, and turned to crystal upon completing her mission. Her sister, Lightning, vowed to bring her back to life, gathering a group of fellow l'Cie to seek a way to avert their own fate and save Serah. Ultimately, Lightning's allies Fang and Vanille sacrificed themselves to summon Ragnarok, creating a pillar of crystal to prevent Cocoon from falling. Their selfless act broke the curse, and Lightning and Serah were happily reunited.

FINAL FANTASY XIII-2 picks up directly after the events of XIII, but not all is as it should be. Reality has suddenly changed right before Serah's eyes, and everyone she knows remembers that fateful event playing out differently, with Lightning trapped inside the pillar too. Her friends believe that Lightning is forever lost, but only Serah knows the truth of what really happened. Now Serah must fight to restore the proper timeline and bring her sister back. Joined by Noel, a young man from a bleak future during the last days of civilization, the two set off on a journey through space and time.

Classic Final Fantasy Gameplay

The Final Fantasy series revolutionized RPGs with the Active Time Battle system, and now it's faster-paced than ever before with the addition of the Paradigm system. Command your entire party simultaneously by selecting a set of strategic roles for each character called a Paradigm. Shift Paradigms on the fly to respond quickly to changing battle conditions, and build a well-rounded Paradigm Deck to be prepared for any combat situation.

The revamped Crystarium system lets you direct character growth exactly to your liking. Level up and choose specialized roles for each team member to maximize your party's versatility.

Recruit Monsters to Fight for You

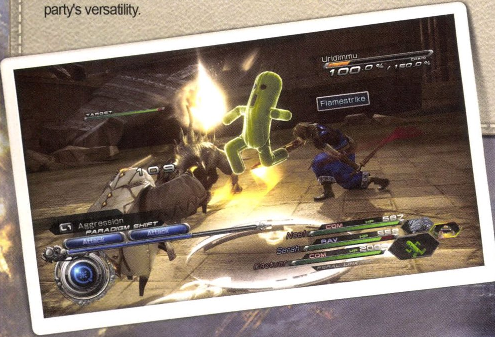
Harness the power of classic Final Fantasy foes like Tonberry and Cactuar by adding defeated foes to your party. Build your Paradigm Deck to include a variety of different monsters with a range of strengths to assist you in battle. Monsters level up just like your other party members too, and you can equip them with gear to change their appearance.

Each monster has a powerful Feral Link ability that you can unleash when its gauge is full, giving you the edge you need to turn the tables on a powerful enemy. With over 190 monsters to collect, experiment with each one in various. Paradigm roles to find a set that complements your party.

Freedom to Explore

The Historia Crux is more than just a world map – it's a massive grid that allows you to choose your destination in both space and time. Through the Historia Crux, the freedom to explore the worlds of Pulse and Cocoon throughout history is yours. Watch familiar locales transform dramatically across vast periods of time and complete quests to restore the timeline.

Use the power to travel through time to turn back the clock and revisit places and events repeatedly to experience different outcomes that affect the story. Don't like the way things turned out the first time? Rewind time and try a different approach to see what happens. By manipulating the timeline at key moments, the fate of the world is in your hands.



TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Drug Reference
Mild Language
Mild Suggestive Themes
Simulated Gambling
Violence

SQUARE ENIX

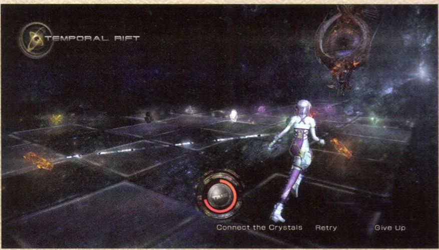
CINEMATIC ACTION
Melee
X
Gun
A
Bresha Ruins -300 AF-
Echoes of the Past
TALK
Awesome!

ADVERTISEMENT

FINAL FANTASY XIII-2

NAVIGATE THE TEMPORAL RIFT

Venture Venture into a dimension that exists outside the normal flow of time to solve the mysteries of the Temporal Rift. In classic and elegantly designed tile puzzles, step on the tiles in the correct order to collect the crystals and progress to the next level.



CINEMATIC ACTION

With the new Cinematic Action feature, you play an active role in the gorgeously animated cutscenes. Instead of simply watching how events play out, play along to button prompts at key moments during a scene to affect the outcome. Performing a successful Cinematic Action can give you the advantage during a boss fight, or cause a different course of events to occur.

MOOGLES ARE BACK!

A beloved tradition in the FINAL FANTASY series, Moogles return and are more adorable and helpful than ever. Mog the Moogle joins your party and transforms into a bow or a sword for Serah to equip in battle. His Mog Clock also allows the party to gain the advantage against enemies by sneaking up on them to perform a preemptive strike.

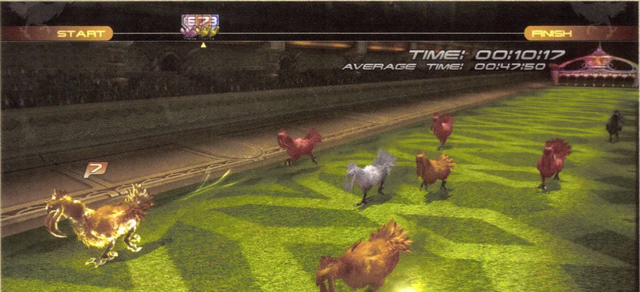
Outside of battle, Mog also has an eye for uncovering valuable hidden items, and you can even toss him at distant treasure chests to retrieve the contents.

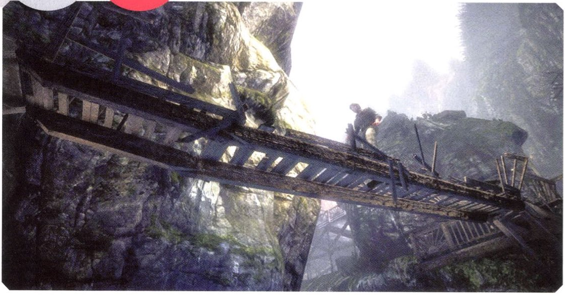
ENJOY A BREAK

When you need a break from the main quest, take a trip to Serendipity, a massive resort area where you can relax and have fun. Serendipity offers lighthearted activities like Chocobo races and casino games.

CHANGE HISTORY

Serah begins her journey with only the goal of finding her sister, Lightning, but in the process unlocks the power to reshape history itself. With the help of Noel, along with returning friends like Snow and Hope, together they must find a way not only to save Lightning, but humanity itself. Dark forces may stand in your way, but how it ends is up to you.





HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Konami** Dev **Vatra Games**

Silent Hill Downpour

Don't forget to wear galoshes

As the rain begins to fall, Murphy Pendleton frantically searches for cover. If there's anything he's learned in his brief time in the partially abandoned Silent Hill, it's that rain begets danger. Armed with only what he can carry in his bare hands, he can't hope to survive against the army of monsters that seems to spring up every time the skies darken. There's no time to wonder why he's being hunted, he simply knows that he has to survive.

In typical *Silent Hill* fashion, Pendleton's past is somewhat muddled. *Silent Hill: Downpour* opens with him incarcerated in prison for a crime he may or may not have committed. Flashbacks of a child's bike in the sprinkling rain imply a dead child. Perhaps his own. Could that be what he's been accused of?

Before anything else is revealed, the bus transporting Pendleton skids out, sliding along the slick road and into a ravine. Seemingly the only conscious survivor of the crash, Murphy takes the opportunity to escape, and after a brief walk finds himself in the town of Silent Hill. From there, the town opens up, allowing for exploration of the southeast part of the town, an area previously unvisited in the series.

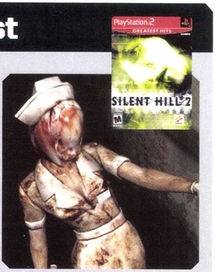
Pendleton wants nothing more than a discreet exit out of town, but he comes across a series of intriguing yet disturbing and dangerous situations instead. While exploring an abandoned apartment building, he comes upon a note on a door accusing the inhabitant of theft from the other tenants of the building. Upon breaking into the room, he finds the thief hung from the ceiling with the loot strewn around his feet. It's alarming, but sets up a bit of a side quest that will lead Murphy to find and interact with other characters that are left in the town.

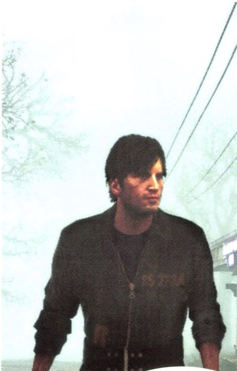
With nothing more than his bare hands, some found weaponry, and the occasional help of mysterious postal worker Howard Blackman, Murphy Pendleton will confront both the town of Silent Hill and his own past in *Downpour*. Undoubtedly, the experience will be unnerving and terrifying. Just try and stay dry.

TAYLOR COCKE

Look to the Past

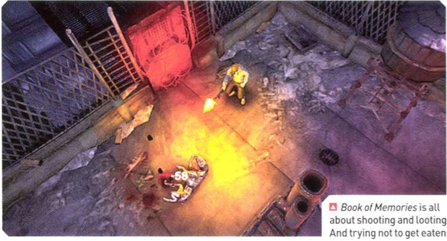
Silent Hill 2 is widely regarded as the high point of the series, and Vatra Games is fully aware of its legacy. So, they're taking cues from the classic horror title. Obviously, *Downpour* marks the return of the open world, but the coolest borrowed feature is the double difficulty sliders, one for combat and one for puzzles. Need a little help with the puzzles? Turn down the difficulty and the increased objective markers will help you along. Prefer no help? Crank 'em up and they'll disappear almost entirely. It's a great compromise between the old and the new.



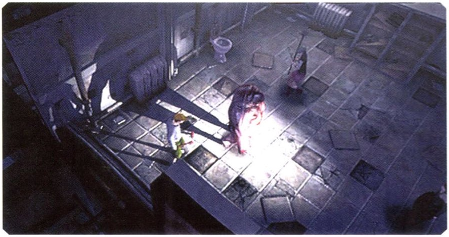


Searching every building for supplies and weapons is essential to survival.

Murphy Pendleton's visit to Silent Hill has more of an open-world feel to it than some of the series' more recent titles.



Book of Memories is all about shooting and looting. And trying not to get eaten.



HANDS-ON Format PS **Vita** ETA **February** Pub **Konami** Dev **Wayforward**

Silent Hill

Book of Memories

Who's afraid of the big bad Pyramid Head?

Typically, horror games are all about disempowerment. The protagonists tend to be a fairly weak characters who are often chased by a bunch of monsters they can't possibly hope to overcome by force. Plus, the hero is usually alone. And yet, *Silent Hill: Book of Memories* arms the player to the teeth and invites them to bring some buddies along. It's finally time for some good old-fashioned revenge on the ghastly denizens of Silent Hill.

Unlike the traditionally slow-paced, atmospheric *Silent Hill* game, *Book of Memories* is a hectic, top-down action title with tons of monsters and loot. Always wanted to take down those pesky Nurses and Butchers, but couldn't with your limited survival horror ammo? Well here's a chance to do so—with up to three friends.

Starting with a customizable character armed with a pistol and a steel pipe, we're assigned the relatively simple mission of clearing out an old warehouse. Melee weapons are a bit riskier, but at least they can't run out of ammo. Don't get too cocky, though, as every weapon can break after enough use. Once that happens, it's time to run around the room frantically searching for a new crowbar, gun—anything. Vita's touchscreen serves the inventory system wonderfully, as most of the interactions with items are done with an easy drag and drop. The game is still being worked on, but it already plays quite well.

It's always interesting to see a different take on an established franchise, and *Book of Memories* is definitely different. Let's hope it represents the series well.

TAYLOR COCKE

Our favorite fighting tactic—spinning like a helicopter—is more effective with swords than fists.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **March** Pub **Tecmo Koei** Dev **Team Ninja**

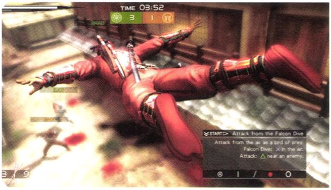
Ninja Gaiden 3

The sharpest tool in the shed

If our collection of ninja Halloween costumes is any indication, we were born to fight crime as stealthy, star-throwing assassins. Unfortunately, it's not easy to start a career as a sword-wielding badass, so we'll settle for the next best thing: *Ninja Gaiden 3*'s multiplayer.

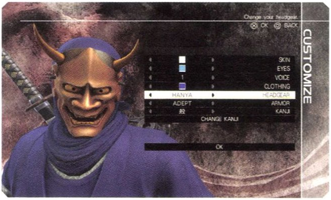
To be honest, we were skeptical at first—but after getting a hands-on (and very bloody) taste of 4v4 ninja battles, we're feeling slightly less nervous. After customizing our appearance, we stepped into the arena with our team. In every direction, ninjas were engaged in face-stabbing contests, swan diving off buildings, hurling powerful blasts of Ninpo energy, and firing flaming arrows at the opposition. We took advantage of the confusion with the game's stealth mechanic; by slowly inching forward, we became invisible to our enemies. We snuck behind an unsuspecting victim and plunged our sword into his back, instantly ending him with a stealth kill. Battles were pretty chaotic at first, but once we got the hang of the action we marveled at how controlled everything started to feel—almost as if the precise, brutal combat of the *Ninja Gaiden* series had been fused with the free-flowing finish of *Assassin's Creed*.

When it comes to the action genre, there aren't many titles that offer meaningful online experiences. We're hopeful that, with a little bit of polish, *Ninja Gaiden 3* may provide some surprisingly addicting online action. RYAN TALJONICK



Attack from the air as a bird of prey.
Falcon Dive: ✕ in the air.
Attack: △ near an enemy.

Ambushing enemies with a swan dive from above is an extremely rewarding tactic.

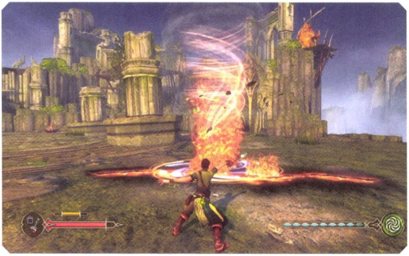


We can customize our ninja's robes, armor, headgear, and the Kanji symbol on his back.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **Spring** Pub **SCEA** Dev **The Workshop**

Sorcery

Harry Potter who?



When not reducing armies of ugly beasts to broken bones, we'll need to solve puzzles with skills such as telekinesis.

Following 18 months of silence, Sony's Move-enabled *Sorcery* has reemerged as one of the motion-sensing peripheral's more promising titles. Forgoing the mindless arm-flailing of similar games (we're looking at you, *Medieval Moves*) in favor of an experience that's actually complemented by controller-free mechanics, *Sorcery* could turn out to be the tech's killer app.

First off, we love that *Sorcery* requires the use of the Move's navigation controller; the game requires both controllers be used for proper play. While moving magic-harnessing hero Finn with the navigation controller is responsive, it's casting his screen-clearing spells with the wand that really separates *Sorcery* from the motion-gaming pack. Rather than mirroring button prompts, we can unleash hell however we like with a handful of intuitive gestures.

A press of the Move button displays available spells along the bottom of the screen, so switching between, say, a troll-roasting wall of fire and a devestating vortex is effortless. We can also mix our magic with lethal results; combining whirlwind and flame spells creates a barbecuing tornado.

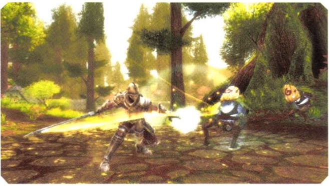
Sorcery also promises a deep potion-mixing and character customization system, huge boss battles, and puzzles that must be solved with magic. Toss in a charming high-fantasy world populated by colorful characters, and *Sorcery* could see us casting a dust-removal spell on our long-neglected Move controllers. MATT CABRAL

HANDS ON Format **PS3** ETA **February** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **38 Studios/Big Huge Games**

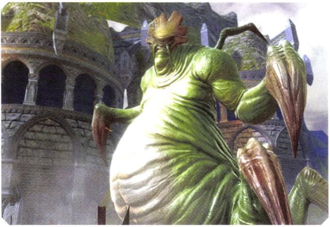
Kingdoms of Amalur

Reckoning

Big fights in a big world



The combat in *Reckoning* feels very *God of War*-inspired, which will make for some extremely intense encounters.



With its mean looks and meaner attitude, this vicious monster actually has a lot in common with our in-laws. Who would've guessed!?

High above the battle for Mel Senshir, a hero is cutting his way through enemies in order to break the siege on the great castle. Attacking forces climb siege ladders to the top of the battlements in vain attempts to take the fortress, only to be pushed back by the hero's furious flurry of swords and magic. Suddenly, a massive creature with a lone, giant eye appears. The huge Niskaru demon looks to turn the tide of battle with a beam of energy from his eye, wiping out everything in its path.

Like *God of War*'s Kratos, the player-created hero of *Kingdoms of Amalur* is more than handy enough with a variety of weaponry (or, if one prefers, a slew of spells) to take down even the biggest monster. Dodging the demon's powerful strikes and getting up close and personal to land a huge combo feels like it's pulled right out of a boss fight in the classic action titles. Depending on which skills are selected from the Destiny trees, these fights range from straight up hack-'n'-slash to ranged spell-oriented fights, to strategic dodges and charges. Regardless of the method with which the monster is taken down, the huge boss fight is cinematic and intense.

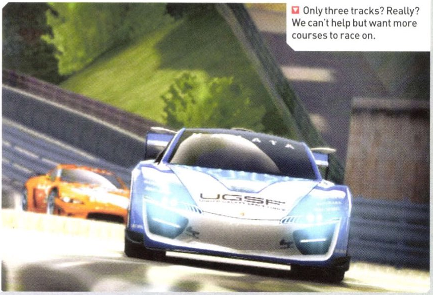
The occasional focus on an isolated, slightly scripted moment is one of the ways that *Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning* is looking to set itself apart from other open-world RPGs. Along with the frantic combat, it seems to be doing just that. TAYLOR COCKE

HANDS-ON Platform **PS Vita** ETA **February** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Cellius**

Ridge Racer

Less road to travel by

Another PlayStation console launch, another *Ridge Racer* to pave the wave for racing games everywhere. Vita's version of the venerable driving franchise captures all the specs fans have come to love: insane drifting, an all-important boost meter, and pumping techno beats behind all those screeching tires. This version also packs in eight-person online multiplayer. What it does not include, however, is variety. With only five cars and three tracks (all borrowed from previous *Ridge Racer* games), play options will be pretty limited until DLC arrives. SCOTT BUTTERWORTH



▼ Only three tracks? Really? We can't help but want more courses to race on.

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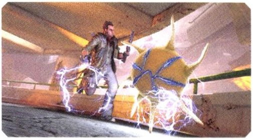
HANDS-ON Format **PS Vita** ETA **February** Pub/Dev **Namco Bandai**

Touch My Katamari

A hands-on approach

Though the hilariously suggestive name may sound like a joke, *Touch My Katamari* actually proves to be an apt title for the most recent installment of the quirky puzzler franchise. While the game's basic mechanics remain unchanged—roll a katamari ball around an open environment to accumulate items and grow the size of the katamari



Somehow it doesn't seem fair that Bryce is unkillable and the demons are. Fairness is overrated.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **January** Pub **Konami** Dev **Rebellion**

NeverDead

Heads will roll

As someone who's had a lifetime (and then some) to perfect the art of demon slaying, *NeverDead's* Bryce isn't messing around. Not only can he dual-wield a selection of guns, he also knows his way around a gigantic sword capable of slicing even the toughest hellspawn to bits. But this immortal demon hunter's deadliest weapon is by far his unique ability to be brutally dismembered—often by his own hand—and regenerate at will. He is immortal, after all.

Being torn limb from limb doesn't sound like much fun, but we used it to our advantage while purging an abandoned building of a demon infestation in one of the game's earlier stages. We tore off Bryce's left arm and tossed it as far as we could to distract a group of dog-like abominations, sending the creatures running to fetch it—at which point we hit L1 to detonate it like a grenade, sending demon bits flying everywhere.

NeverDead isn't just about blood and gore though, and at times Bryce needs to use his head—quite literally—to solve puzzles. To get past a locked door, we popped off his head and assumed direct control, rolling it through a nearby vent to get through to the other side. It's a quirky, gory adventure with a lot of goofy humor and plenty of dismemberment. We spent a lot of time hopping around on a single leg, trying to gather up our body parts while shooting and stabbing grotesque demons into pieces.

Being unkillable certainly has its advantages, and we're eager to see where the rest of Bryce's disjointed journey will lead us. CAROLYN GUDMUNDSON

It burns!
Bryce's body can take a lot of punishment, and our experiments with lighting him on fire paid off. While aflame, Bryce can shoot fire bullets as well as function as a literal human torch, illuminating dark areas.

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itself—players can now shift the shape of their katamari using Vita's touchpads, compressing it into a rolling pin or stretching it into a pinwheel. While that might not sound like a substantial change, it introduces an entire new dimension of problem solving and exploration.

We spent our hands-on time collecting batteries, blocks, and toy cars in a larger-than-life version of a child's bedroom, but not all the items were easy to spot or simple to reach. We had to roll our katamari between upright books that obscured smaller items from view and across narrow shelves while balancing precariously high above the floor. For such a simple change, the added challenge and strategy felt surprisingly new yet still perfectly in line with the series' traditional gameplay. It's a good thing, too—after one too many stale sequels, we were more than ready for *Katamari* to feel novel again. SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Where the hell is...

The Last Guardian (SCEA)

Bad news: Lead dev Fumito Ueda is finishing the game as a contractor. Good news: It might finally release this year.

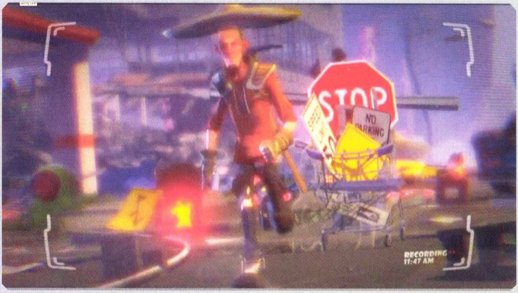
The latest on...

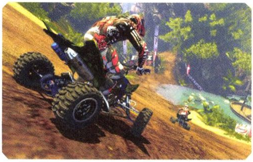
New shots, new games, new info

Fortnite

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Epic Games** Dev **Epic Games**

The freaks come out at night in *Fortnite*, a new twist on tower defense from Epic Games. Apparently inspired by the PC phenomenon *Minecraft*, we're tasked with rummaging for supplies during the day to build up our defenses and face off against hordes of zombies at night. Though the construction isn't scripted, we won't be able to build whatever we want. It's been hinted that constructing buildings to house survivors will be the game's main focus. The art style is reminiscent of *Team Fortress 2*, leading us to hope that *Fortnite* shares a similar sense of humor as well. To the ramparts, all!

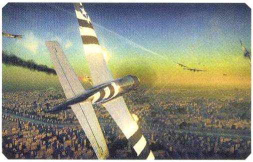




Project Haste

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Techland**

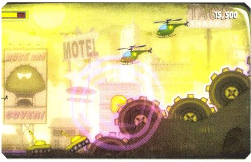
The developer of *Nail'd* is set to release another arcade-style ATV racer in 2012, featuring ATV customization, a competitive online multiplayer element, and several gameplay modes including tournament.



Birds of Steel

Format **PS3** ETA **Q1** Pub **Konami** Dev **Gaijin Entertainment**

Birds of Steel will host missions inspired by some of the most famous aerial battles of WWII and feature over one hundred planes. Variations on levels of flight-sim realism should expand the appeal to all experience levels.



Tales from Space: Mutant Blobs Attack

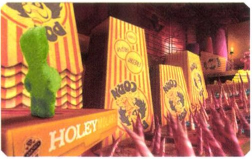
Format **PS Vita** ETA **TBD** Pub/Dev **DrinkBox Studios**

Tales from Space is back with a brand new Blob and new levels and powers. *Mutant Blobs Attack* plans to make use of Vita's touch capabilities to complement its puzzle-platforming.

The Dark Eye: Demonicon

Format **PS3** ETA **September** Pub **Kalypso Media** Dev **Noumena Studios**

The Dark Eye: Demonicon is a fantasy RPG full of the undead, demons, and numerous other things that go bump in the Shadow Lands of Aventuria. It doesn't seem like a very happy place to live, but it might not be a bad spot for a virtual vacation.



Sour Patch Kids: World Gone Sour

Format **PSV** ETA **TBD** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Capcom**

Based on the *Sour Patch Kids* candy, *World Gone Sour* features a candy piece that's lost its way and must venture through the wide world of humans to find his way to a stomach. Isn't there a five-second rule?

Record of Agarest War 2

Format **PS3** ETA **Summer** Pub **Aksys Games** Dev **Idea Factory/Red Entertainment**

While we're sure the main focus of *Record of Agarest War 2* is the story and the turn-based grid combat, we can't get past the Move compatible bathtub and massage minigames.

MotorStorm RC

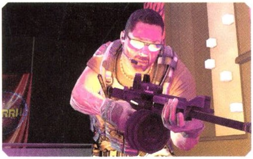
Format **PS Vita** ETA **February** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Evolution**

With a smaller screen comes smaller cars. The newest *MotorStorm* title is a stark contrast to its predecessors, with diminutive RC cars racing around tiny tracks—Micro Machines, anyone? It's an odd addition to the franchise, but seems Vita appropriate.

Enemy Front

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub/Dev **City Interactive**

Making use of CryEngine 3, *Enemy Front* is an FPS about a WWII soldier who finds himself in Nazi territory on a variety of assignments ranging from assault to the more stealthy espionage and sabotage. The game takes place over a period of several years.



Unit 13

Format **PS Vita** ETA **February** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Zipper Interactive**

Unit 13 appears be a straightforward third-person corridor shooter, but it does sport a wide range of online options. *Unit 13*'s online play offers co-op, daily challenges, and a status feed so we can see how our friends' performances stack up.

Gut Reaction

The awesome and the awful

▲Child's Play
A videogame charity for sick children, Child's Play raised more than $1.95 million in 2011.

▲Rumors Rising
Word on the street is that *Dead Rising 3* is in development. We sure hope so.

▲Banhammer
A guy bought six PS3s and copies of *MW3* to boost his stats and was rewarded with a 14-year ban.

SONY
PSVITA
32GB

▼Pricey Pieces
Vita's proprietary memory cards range in price from $30 to $120. We love Vita, but that's still pretty steep.

▼Vita Lockdown
We're looking forward to Vita's launch, but we're bummed each machine is locked to a single PSN account.

▼Not the Same
We're stoked for the *Tony Hawk Pro Skater HD* remake, but sad it won't have the original soundtrack. Q_Q

DIAMANT
OOL & DIE

Tired of the same ol' combat shooter experience? Legendary PlayStation franchise **TWISTED METAL** returns to change the face of multiplayer gaming.

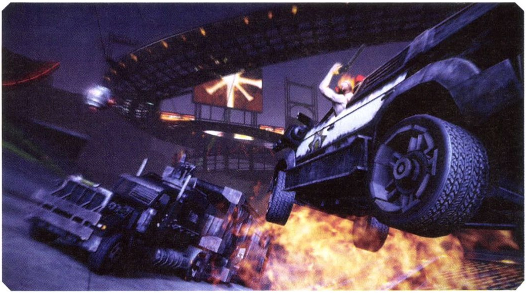
BY EVAN SHAMOON

ROAD RAGE

Format **PS3** ETA **FEBRUARY 14** Pub **SCEA** Dev **EAT SLEEP PLAY**

MULTISLAYER

Twisted Metal goes berserk with a new take on **multiplayer** mayhem



Housed inside a small brick building in downtown Salt Lake City, the developers at Eat Sleep Play are doing little more than just that. The team is a relatively small 40-man operation (well, 38 and two women), and they've been crunching on the new *Twisted Metal* for months, on the tail end of its nearly four-year development cycle. It's an irony that's nearly as ripe as the building's storied history: It was for generations a hardware factory, churning out everything from nails to ammunition to all manner of twisted metal.

The small size has helped the team maintain its focus and cohesion. "It's hard to maintain a grassroots culture when you grow too big," says Scott Campbell, co-founder of Eat Sleep Play and our tour guide through today's nearly finalized build of the game. "You start to lose the whole synergy. You either increase your team size or you add time; the sweet spot, for us, is right between 30 to 40." By pushing the release of the game into 2012, the team got the time it needed. Of course, having a publisher like Sony on its side didn't hurt, either; the bulk of the audio, networking, cinematics, and QA were handled by various Sony staffers, some of whom have essentially been full time.

REINVENTING THE WHEEL

Though the game is built to accommodate splitscreen, today we get ESP's conference room set all to ourselves. The action, though incredibly frantic and fast-paced, is somehow more accessible than it looks. What's perhaps most impressive about this new-and-improved *Twisted Metal* is the sheer diversity; everything from the vehicles and environments to the potential playstyles allows for a vast number of approaches and combinations. The game boasts eight different environments, ranging from a suburban sprawl to a freakish amusement park to Black Rock Stadium, a series staple (between the eight, there are 35 different maps available in different sizes, depending on the size of the group). The vehicles range from eighteen-wheeler semis and SUVs to helicopters and motorcycles. Whether it's racers or shooters, most games simply don't allow for anything even approaching this sort of openness: Playing as the Ecto-1-like Meat Wagon feels extremely different to one of the game's sportier vehicles, and even more discrete from the game's helicopter.

It's no accident, either: To realize its Frankenstein-like vision of a car combat game, ESP created its own bespoke engine that would accommodate its unique brand of sprawling, chaotic vehicular warfare. The levels are so enormous that they effectively become "open-world" experiences, often

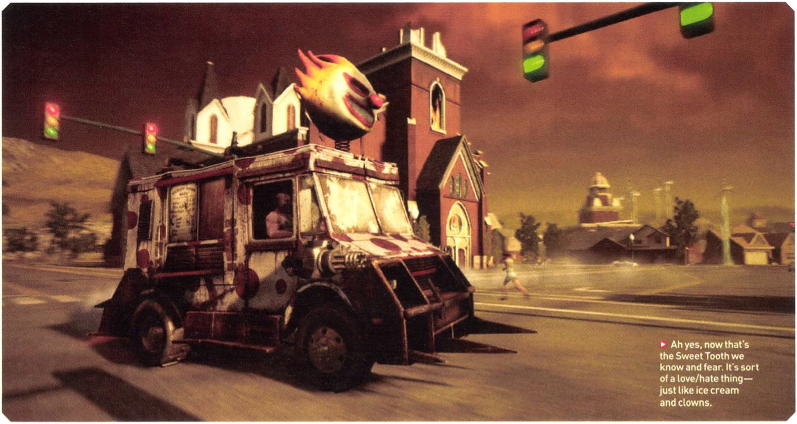
TO REALIZE ITS FRANKENSTEIN-LIKE VISION OF A CAR COMBAT GAME, ESP CREATED ITS OWN BESPOKE ENGINE THAT WOULD ACCOMMODATE ITS UNIQUE BRAND OF SPRAWLING, CHAOTIC VEHICULAR WARFARE.

Sweet Tooth's mech mode makes us think: "Optimus Prime in need of rehab."

complete with distinctive localities, towering buildings, multiple vertical levels, and freeways connecting it all (the freeways often sit on the periphery and make great getaway routes for faster vehicles). "It started as *Warhawk's* engine, and since then, we've redone every single engine component and adapted it to *Twisted Metal*," says Campbell.

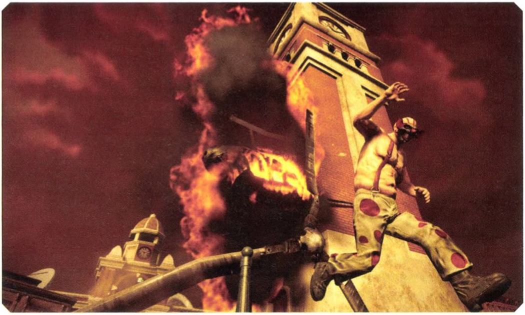
In order to bring more heft to its car physics, the team licensed the popular Havoc physics engine. But it wasn't quite what they needed, and after some early experiments with realism, they promptly decided to modify it extensively to achieve a more exaggerated, more "fun," variation of reality. "Havoc has done a great job for us, but we put our arcade layer on it, sort of bastardizing the Havoc physics," says Campbell. "They've never had someone do that with their engine, but anytime we've had an issue, they've been right on it. They've been really great to work with," he says, often going so far as to send a developer to ESP to work onsite.

Of course, the expanded scope comes with its own share of compromises as well, and this is something the team is acutely aware of. The game looks miles better than it did even six months ago, but it's not meant to compete with the likes of gaming's finest in terms of sheer visual polish. "In most games, you're confined to the road—you can't even jump a curb," says Campbell. "All your [graphical] resources are packed in front of the player. Not only can you go pretty much anywhere [in *Twisted Metal*], but we have a helicopter that can spin around 360 degrees high overhead and see the whole world at once." Early in development, when ESP showed its publisher Sony what it had been working on, Sony perceived the potential problems. "They said, first and foremost, you need to get rid of the helicopter, for graphical reasons," says Campbell.



Ah yes, now that's the Sweet Tooth we know and fear. It's sort of a love/hate thing—just like ice cream and clowns.

> **"EVERYONE WOULD BE IN DENIAL; WE CAN'T SOLVE IT, SO WHEN ARE WE GONNA KILL IT?" RECALLS CAMPBELL. "WE GOT TO A POINT WHERE IT WAS ALMOST COMICAL—THEY WERE ALL VERY LEGIT REASONS WHY WE SHOULDN'T DO IT. BUT WE DID IT ANYWAY."**



"But we were like, 'It's fun!'" Same went for Sweet Tooth's ability to transform into a humanoid mech with the power to fly. But the team stuck to its guns on the matter—despite, as Campbell recalls, many of his developers avoiding working on the vehicles in question for a long time, assuming they would eventually be axed. "Everyone would be in denial; we can't solve it, so when are we gonna kill it?" recalls Campbell. "We got to a point where it was almost comical—they were all very legit reasons why we shouldn't do it. But we did it anyway."

Based on our experience with the game, the choice has ultimately proven to be a good one. The inclusion of flying vehicles mixes up the action and adds an extra layer of unpredictable dynamism to the experience. Piloting the helicopter is incredibly liberating, particularly after a time using the game's four-wheeled vehicles; the craft is agile and light, and one of its guns is usable from the first-person perspective. Buzzing through a level mere feet from the ground—and then suddenly taking to the skies and laying precisely into a car below with FPS-level accuracy—is a rather fantastic experience in and of itself.

NEW CAR SMELL

Twisted Metal is designed to be pick-up-and-play, in a way that most games—particularly most competitive multiplayer games—are not. Upon picking up the controller, there's a high probability of getting caught up in a dozen high-speed chases in the first five minutes—but it's unlikely to die more than a few times. "We don't like how in a lot of online shooters, you take a couple of steps and you get killed," says co-founder David Jaffe. "There's a kind of a pacing where we want to live longer to form relationships with the people who we're fighting, and really build these chases, and

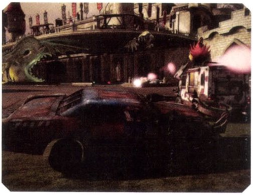
The key to *Twisted Metal's* multiplayer is the sheer diversity of ways to kill. Sinister creativity is rewarded at every turn.

hunts, and turning the tables on someone when you grab a really cool weapon. So you might spawn and you might have a laser sight on you, but you've still got 12 to 15 seconds to defend yourself or get out of that guy's line of sight. So there's absolutely no 'spawn/die/spawn/die.' I f-cking hate that."

Like many before it, the team has striven for accessibility and depth. "We really wanted to flesh that out with this new game and make sure that after that sort of 'shallow end of the pool' there really was a lot to do and a lot to learn," says Jaffe. He says the team has essentially been looking at their game almost like an e-sport, most clearly evident in its Team modes, which are built to be played cooperatively, with clans and parties and headsets.

While perhaps not always necessary—there's still quite a bit of success to be garnered from pedal-to-the-metal, finger-on-the-trigger action—strategy plays a much bigger role in this newest *Twisted Metal* than it did in earlier iterations. If, for instance, you're playing the game's Nuke mode, whoever is driving the Juggernaut—that's the semi—can let his buddies drive up into the truck bed and man its various mounted gun. As is the case with some of the more class-based vehicles, only one Juggernaut is allowed per team, and two Junkyard Dogs, the game's "healing" unit, which fires out health bombs that refill the health of any teammate by 30 to 40 percent within their blast radius. As some testers figured out, putting Junkyard Dogs into the back of the very powerful Juggernaut is a great strategy: when the big guy starts to lose health, back those Junkyard Dogs out of the trailer, heal up, and then go back inside and hide. "It's been really fun to watch those combinations form," says Jaffe. "And then on top of it, watching other teams learn to counter that. They know, 'Here comes Junkyard Dog—don't let him get into the back of the semi, or make sure that when he gets out he doesn't get back in!'" These sort of combinations and strategies are very much a part of the new *Twisted Metal* DNA.

The game was initially planned as a multiplayer-only PSN title, but eventually grew to include a single-player experience as well. A characteristically dark *Twisted Metal* narrative has since been added to the game, as made apparent in full campaigns for each of its three characters, complete with live-action cutscenes and animated models inside the vehicles. Though the game has fewer human characters than previous *Twisted Metal* titles, it has more vehicles than

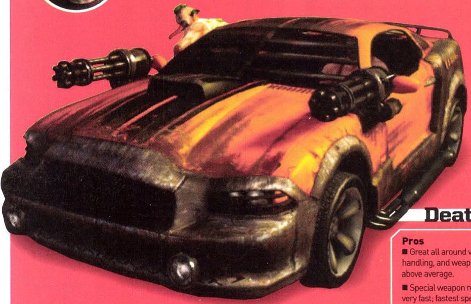


ever—which, as the team points out, really *are* the characters (in the sense that that's what we're looking at for 98 percent of the time we're playing the game). Previous *Twisted Metal* titles' campaigns took the form of one deathmatch after the next, until finally arriving at a boss, the defeat of whom would result in the unlocking of a two-minute movie. "In this one we have a lot more variety in terms of what you do," says Jaffe. "It's certainly not a missioned-based game—we really wanted to stay true to vehicle combat—but it's not just rinse, repeat, deathmatch, over and over and over."

The road to completion has been a long one, and ESP is still pushing to make sure it can fully balance the enormously varied multiplayer experience before it ships. Fortunately, the developer has designed a system whereby it can quickly and easily tweak variables without requiring a full "patch"; rather, the PS3 will seamlessly download a tiny file upon booting up the game. Players will have some degree of customization over their vehicles, and events are also planned (think: double XP weekends, vehicle stat competitions, etc.). As the team heads down the home stretch, it brings some 20 years of experience with the franchise, but making a game remains a tough process. "Any creative process is kind of agony," says Campbell. There are 10,000 things to integrate—it's hard, long work." He pauses. "It's kinda like giving birth. It's tough to get it out, but eventually you do, and maybe you even want to do it all over again."

KEYS TO THE RIDES

Dev **David Jaffe** breaks down the strengths and weaknesses of *Twisted Metal's* vehicles



Death Warrant

Pros

- Great all around vehicle. Speed, handling, and weapons are all well above average.
- Special weapon regenerates very fast; fastest special weapon regeneration in the game.

Cons

- Special weapon does weak-to-average damage.

Axel

Pros

- Primary special lets players roll over enemies for a devastating monster truck-like crush. Like Warthog, attack compounds with each successful crush within a time limit. The more you crush, the more damage.
- Jumps extremely high. Great for grabbing hard-to-reach pickups, leaping to ledges other vehicles struggle to reach, and escaping driving surfaces that plague other vehicles (ice and lava).
- Fantastic turn rate. Flips an easy 180-degree turn with little worry of oversteering. Great for re-targeting enemies that zoom past.

Cons

- Low armor and ram damage.
- Speed is low despite good handling.
- Special weapon requires skill to line up the crush—or a wasted EMP blast to freeze enemies so the crush is easier to connect with.

Crimson Fury

Pros

- Incredible handling—once you get used to it.
- Fastest vehicle in the game.
- Very powerful special weapon flamethrower.
- One of the fastest vehicles for sacrificing the enemy leader in Nuke. If you can survive long enough to reach the sacrifice launcher, you have a strong chance of getting the missile to fire.

Cons

- Handling is very challenging; an unskilled player will pinball all over the map.
- Very weak. A single ram from Juggernaut or Darkside can take this vehicle out.
- Flamethrower special is very strong but you have to be close to use it. For some players, getting such a weak and challenging vehicle to drive close to bad guys may be too much to ask.

Juggernaut

Pros

- He is a beast with 700 Armor points.
- Massive ramming damage.
- Large energy reserve, allowing him to activate his shield six times using a single energy bar.
- Can carry two passengers to man his two turrets.
- Cab Tri-gun—manned by a partner—is the strongest turret and the most powerful weapon in the game if you can get consistent shots.

Cons

- Extremely sluggish handling and turning ability.
- Becomes the focus of attack in battles.
- Only one allowed per team in ranked Team games. Bring out only when really needed.
- Cab guns only really effective if driver works with gunner teammates to line up shots.
- A headshot from the sniper rifle takes out Juggernaut with a single hit!

Shadow

Pros

- Powerful primary special if you can hit enemies with it from far away. The farther the Coffin Bomb travels, the more damage it does.
- Secondary Remote Coffin Bomb has a large area of effect and you can let it cook to stage two before detonating for more damage.
- Strong armor.
- Blast of primary and secondary will go through walls, making it impossible for players to use the environment for cover.

Cons

- Speed and turn rate are a bit sluggish.
- Precise aim and planning required for effective and damaging special attacks.
- Must shield and/or brake when activating primary attack or you will be caught in its blast and take damage as well.

Darkside

Pros

- Fantastic ram damage, especially when coupled with primary special ram attack.
- Doing a turbo dash with primary special ram attack results in a devastating close attack that takes out smaller vehicles with one hit.
- Great armor.
- Primary special's self-targeting Tri-gun attack has a hard time missing!
- Darkside can trade a special in for high-impact, rear-fired road mines when he needs to get away fast.

Cons

- Primary special Tri-gun may not miss but it also doesn't do much damage.
- Slow vehicle with a sluggish turn rate.
- Darkside takes longer to break out of enemy EMP freeze blasts than most other vehicles.

Roadboat

Pros

- Great armor.
- Primary special Ricocheting Magnets inflict average damage, but get an enemy in a tight space and they do huge bonus damage upon first bounce.
- Secondary special Magnet sucks enemy vehicles onto your car. Launch them into other enemies, turbo ram into walls, or toss them off rooftops and ledges!

Cons

- Sluggish turning, below average speed.
- Enemy trapped on your magnet can use some of its attacks against you!
- Enemies can break off quickly so weapon must be used in the correct areas.

Outlaw

Pros

- Above average ramming vehicle.
- Burns through turbo slower than any other vehicles. Turbo + strong ramming = powerful rams!
- Above average armor while maintaining decent speed and above average handling.
- Great for coupling with the shotgun sidearm and shotgun pickup. Ramming + dual wielding shotguns = deadly effective close combat brawler.

Cons

- Primary special is average at best.
- Secondary special takes effort to use and only does above average damage.
- A few close turbo rams can take out the smaller vehicles. Problem is, the smaller vehicles tend to be much faster than Outlaw.

Junkyard Dog

Pros

- Above average ramming.
- Strong armor.
- Easy to use primary special: toss a captive taxicab into enemies in the distance.
- T-slide with captured taxicab attached and hit enemy to ram him far away and inflict substantial damage.
- In Team games, secondary is a Remote Taxi bomb. Detonate the bomb to heal teammates within the blast!
- Breaks out of EMP freezes faster than most vehicles.

Cons

- Limited availability in ranked Team games means the enemy team often targets this healer first.
- Junkyard Dog cannot heal himself.
- Non-Team game secondary weapon is a Remote Taxi Bomb that has two stages. Stage 2 is very powerful with a big area of effect, but stage 1 is practically useless. Plant the bomb in a place where it can cook to maximum effect for greatest potential.

Warthog

Pros

- Second highest armor in game.
- Devastating primary special. Rear up into a tank-tread wheelie and crush enemies for huge damage! Damage compounds with each successful crush.

Cons

- Exposes a red weak spot when he is prepping for his two special attacks. Whenever Warthog is in his reared-up tank tread wheelie, enemies that shoot this weak spot will do 2X damage! Hit him with a power missile or Reaper's charged-up special weapon [the flaming chainsaw] and it's close to an instant kill.
- Slow and sluggish. While his special weapon crush does huge damage, it's not always easy to catch the enemies you want to smash under your treads.

Reaper

Pros

- Most powerful special in the game, Reaper's Flaming Chainsaw is fearsome!
- Reaper's secondary special Sniper RPG attack lets this weak vehicle deal great damage from vantage points that keep him safe from the battle. When the RPG explodes it damages any vehicle in immediate range. Cooking the RPG for several seconds before detonation doubles its damage.
- Faster and more agile than the vast majority of other vehicles.
- Breaks out of EMP freezes and enemy magnets almost instantly. Hard to catch, difficult to ram.

Cons

- Weakest vehicle in game. Big vehicles can take Reaper out with a single ram!
- His Flaming Chainsaw has zero aim assist so getting a hit with this powerful weapon—*after* you've put the effort in to set it on fire in the first place—takes patience and skill.
- Aiming mode for Reaper's secondary Sniper RPG makes him vulnerable to attack. If you are busy zooming and aiming, you won't see the enemy coming to ram you.

Vermin

Pros

- Secondary special is a guided missile. Great to recon battlefield or use aim assist to hit enemies.
- Zero aim-assisted missile hits result in big damage.
- Detonated missiles do area-effect damage. Send into a scrum to rack up major damage points in Carnage mode.
- Primary weapon fires very fast.
- Above average armor.

Cons

- Getting a non-aim assist hit with secondary Missile is one of the hardest things to do in the game.
- Sluggish turning, slow speed.
- Missile appears on radar and can be shot out of the sky.
- Missile plays "Three Blind Mice," alerting enemies to its presence.

Talon

Pros

- Can fly, making escapes easy.
- Great to pair with sniper rifle.
- Secondary Magnet is great for rescuing buddies in Team modes. Or pick up and drop bad guys.

Cons

- Low armor.
- Getting hit with an EMP freezes Talon and forces him to the ground.
- Both special weapons take precision and accuracy.
- Most pickups are at street level.
- In a Nuke game, Talon takes the longest to feed a Faction Leader to the Sacrificial Missile Launcher.
- Captured enemies easily freed with small amount of damage.

RULE THE ROAD

Get the competitive **multiplayer** edge with these exclusive strategy breakdowns

BLACK ROCK STADIUM

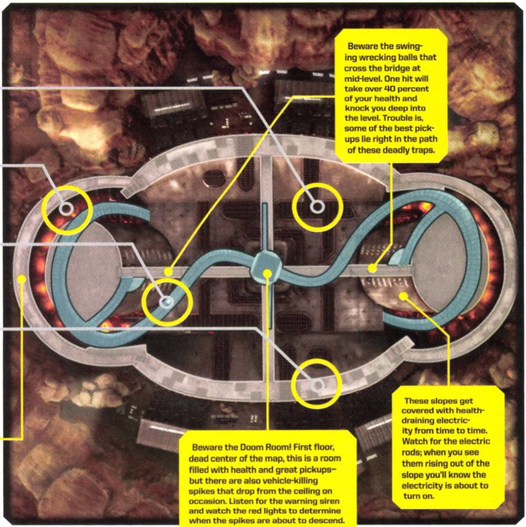
Team Last Man Standing tips

Learn the pattern of the moving walls and use them to your advantage.

Ram unsuspecting opponents into the lava.

The elevated half-pipe is a great place to hide and monitor the battle.

Activate the spectator pad to launch human powerups into the arena.



Beware the swinging wrecking balls that cross the bridge at mid-level. One hit will take over 40 percent of your health and knock you deep into the level. Trouble is, some of the best pickups lie right in the path of these deadly traps.

Learn the path of the health orb. Keep your vehicle in the beam of light as it travels through the level to transfer its health. Use it wisely because once it's gone—even if an enemy drained it—it's out of play for a while.

Beware the Doom Room! First floor, dead center of the map, this is a room filled with health and great pickups—but there are also vehicle-killing spikes that drop from the ceiling on occasion. Listen for the warning siren and watch the red lights to determine when the spikes are about to descend. Perhaps the pattern on the floor holds the key to survival?

These slopes get covered with health-draining electricity from time to time. Watch for the electric rods; when you see them rising out of the slope you'll know the electricity is about to turn on.

KEYS TO THE RIDES

Kamikaze

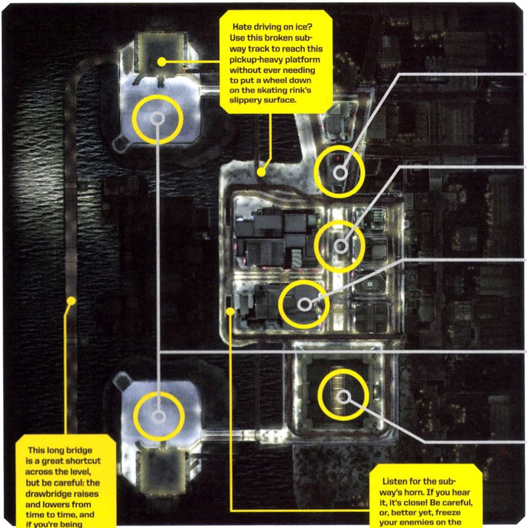
Pros

- Third-fastest vehicle in the game.
- Primary special Flamethrower is very powerful. A high-damage fireball shoots out for every two seconds the flame touches an enemy.
- Fantastic handling.
- Secondary special EMP's 360-degree blast can freeze multiple enemies at the same time; a great asset for Team games.

Cons

- A light body means it's easy to ram off ledges and rooftops.
- Light armor means death via one or two rams from a larger vehicle.
- Breaks out of enemy EMP attacks faster than most other vehicles.

METRO SQUARE



Hate driving on ice? Use this broken subway track to reach this pickup-heavy platform without ever needing to put a wheel down on the skating rink's slippery surface.

This long bridge is a great shortcut across the level, but be careful: the drawbridge raises and lowers from time to time, and if you're being chased when the bridge raises, you could find yourself with enemies coming up from behind and an unbreakable dead end ahead.

Listen for the subway's horn. If you hear it, it's close! Be careful, or, better yet, freeze your enemies on the tracks and let the subway take them out.

Team Hunted tips

This is a great vantage point if you can figure out how to get access.

Jump down into the subway to avoid detection or for a quick escape.

Use the toy store to gain access to an upper circuit.

Lure the "hunted" onto the ice then take them out as they struggle to escape.

Tour the museum for a bounty of powerups.

Sweet Tooth

Pros

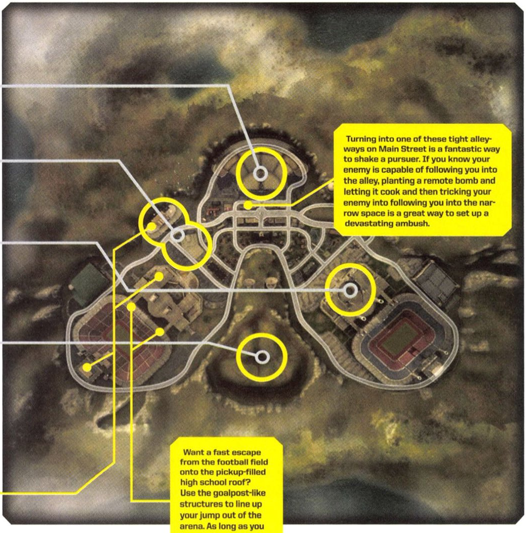
- Can transform and fly, offering great battlefield vantage points as well as shortcut and escape opportunities.
- During flight, the player can do a Sweet Slam which brings him down on top of enemies below and damages all enemies in the immediate area. The higher you slam from, the more damage you do.
- Tooth's primary special–the Laughing Ghost–can target enemies through any object as his ghostly head attack will burrow through the ground and walls as it pursues its target! Besides doing a decent amount of damage, this weapon's targeting abilities will root out any enemies who have "gone dark" and are trying to hide in order to win a round of Last Man Standing.
- When in robot form, Sweet Tooth has a powerful Sixaxis-activated ram attack. Get close enough to use this and knock your enemies over like bowling pins!
- For an ice cream truck, Sweet Tooth has surprisingly good handling and pick up.

Cons

- Average damage for all of his attacks except the hard-to-connect-with Sweet Ram.
- Players can target Tooth's primary Laughing Ghost and shoot it out of the sky. They can also see the weapon on radar and hear its signature laugh as it travels through the level.
- Flying in Bot form drains Tooth's turbo. Without turbo, Tooth is brought down to the ground.
- An EMP blast will cause Tooth to transform out of Bot mode and back into Truck mode, thus causing the hit player to lose a special weapon.
- Sweet Tooth's sidearms are very hard to hit enemies with when in Bot mode, so make sure you are okay losing a large percentage of that functionality if you want the advantages of being a flying robot!

SUNSPRINGS, CA

Team Deathmatch tips



The theater rooftop gives you a great vantage point for long-range weapons.

The hospital/grocery store circuit is a great place to find powerups.

The schools contain some of the strongest powerups.

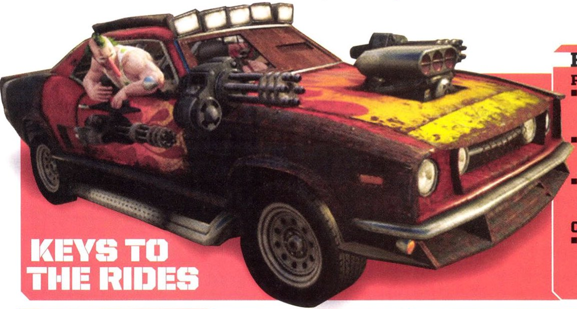
Destroy key landmarks to gain access to other parts of the map.

Turning into one of these tight alleyways on Main Street is a fantastic way to shake a pursuer. If you know your enemy is capable of following you into the alley, planting a remote bomb and letting it cook and then tricking your enemy into following you into the narrow space is a great way to set up a devastating ambush.

The tight hallways of the high schools and hospital are great places to use close-range pickups like the RC Car Rico Bomb and the Shotgun. If you are trying to get the super-powerful triple damage bounce combo from the Rico Bombs or Roadboat magnet projectiles, these are great places to get that deadly bonus!

Want a fast escape from the football field onto the pickup-filled high school roof? Use the goalpost-like structures to line up your jump out of the arena. As long as you jump between those posts, you'll hit the rooftops every time.

KEYS TO THE RIDES



Roadkill

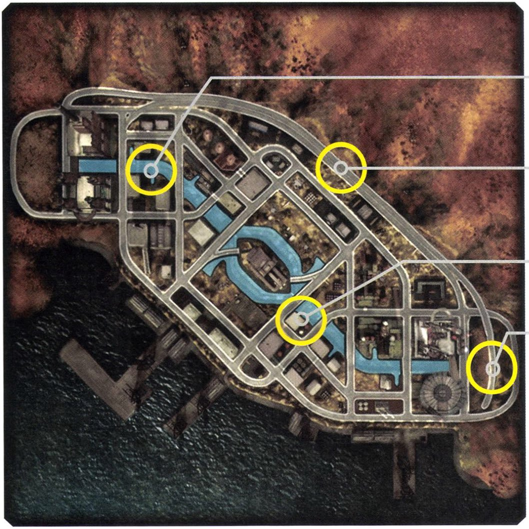
Pros

- Special weapon is hard to use but if you manage to tag the enemy with most of your payload—especially the hard-to-get Blood Missiles—you can tear up the battlefield!
- Pop the trunk for high-damage, high-impact road mines. An enemy who hits these ground bombs bounces high and far; great for defensive driving when you need to escape fast.
- All around good handling and solid armor. A great soldier class who is a little weaker but also faster than his "cousin" Death Warrant.

Cons

- To get the most out of your special, it takes time to charge up the three levels and skill to hit with most of the bullets and missiles. If you don't line up your shots, this can be one of the weakest specials in the game.

WATKYN'S HARBOR



Nuke tips

Fly the nuke through the canals to avoid getting shot down.

Use the freeway for a safe, efficient route when transporting the faction leader to the missile launcher.

This rooftop is a great vantage point for taking out the nuke.

This missile launcher is a great location for team defense.

IF YOU KNOW YOUR ENEMY IS CAPABLE OF FOLLOWING YOU INTO THE ALLEY, PLANTING A REMOTE BOMB AND LETTING IT COOK IS A GREAT WAY TO SET UP A DEVASTATING AMBUSH.

Meat Wagon

Pros

- Meat Wagon's secondary special is a powerful player-controlled gurney—loaded with bombs—that can be steered into enemy targets. A direct hit with the gurney bomb is one of the most powerful attacks in the game and the explosion yields far-reaching area-of-effect damage, too.
- Meat Wagon's primary attack—a non-player-controlled bomb filled gurney—does good damage while also popping the enemy high into the air. Great for knocking an enemy off course or taking him out of commission long enough to follow up with a devastating ram or power missile attack.
- Primary gurney attack is one of the game's strongest homing specials.
- Above average armor.

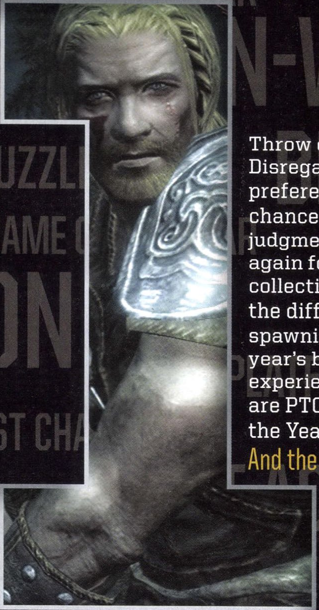
Cons

- Below average turn rate.
- Getting a direct hit with the remote-controlled gurney bomb takes great skill. It's hard to hit a moving target at the speeds the gurney travels, not to mention colliding with a wall or other environmental objects will auto-detonate the weapon.
- An enemy can shoot and destroy the gurney before it reaches its target.
- Players on the receiving end of the gurney can see it on radar and know it's coming because of the loud, incessant begging/pleading/screaming of the still-alive patient chained to the bed!

GAMES OF

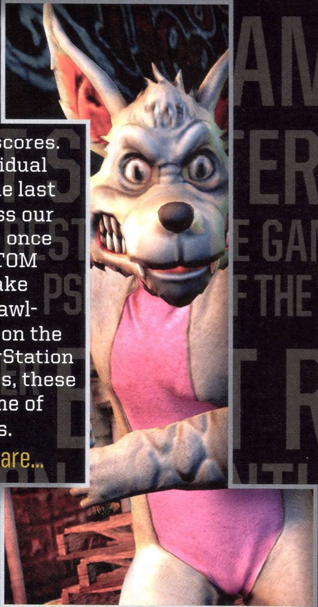
PSN GAME OF THE YEAR
BEST OPEN-WORLD GAM
PSP GAME OF THE YEAR
BEST PUZZLE GAME
BEST SPORTS GAME
BEST FIGHTING GAME
BEST MULTIP
BEST OPEN-W
YEAR
PS3 GAME O
BEST SPORTS GAME
BEST VEHICLE

THE YEAR



Throw out the scores. Disregard individual preferences. One last chance to assess our judgment. Time once again for the PTOM collective to make the difficult, brawl-spawning calls on the year's best PlayStation experiences. Yes, these are PTOM's Game of the Year awards.

And the winners are...



PUB **SCEA** DEV **NAUGHTY DOG**

BEST ACTION

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

> We're thrilled to be named winner of the Best Action Game for 2011. Our goal with *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception* was to make a truly unforgettable interactive cinematic experience that everyone can enjoy, and it's awards like this that help us feel we've achieved that goal. We're looking forward to continuing to create games that attain 'Best of' status. Thank you to everyone who voted for *Uncharted 3*!
>
> **Evan Wells**, Co-President, Naughty Dog

HONORABLE MENTION

Dead Space 2
Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Visceral Games**

CLIFFHANGER

Was there any other PlayStation game as highly anticipated this year as *Uncharted 3*? We think not. But perhaps the most amazing achievement is that despite our sky-high expectations for the threequel, Naughty Dog delivered exactly what we hoped for and more. There are few games as breathtakingly beautiful as *Drake's Deception* and combined with its deft blend of third-person shooter action and engrossing interactive storytelling, it offers one of the most engaging and satisfying experiences in all of gaming. But perhaps the most notable aspect of the game is in its character development. We loved following the high-flying adventures of Drake and company before, but this is the year we finally began to truly understand the bond between them. This is a high adventure at its finest and we can't wait to see where the story goes next. ■

> There are few games as breathtakingly beautiful as *Drake's Deception.*

ALSO RAN... ALSO WON!

BEST BOSS FIGHT

Dark Souls
Great Grey Wolf Sif
Dark Souls was rife with some of 2011's most memorable boss encounters, but our favorite has to be the Great Grey Wolf Sif, a giant wolf that holds a huge sword in its mouth. How cool is that?

BEST WEAPON

Saints Row: The Third
Professor Genki's "Octopuss" Cannon This baby launches live octopi that attach to people's heads. Once affixed, they mind control their targets and can be detonated with the push of a button. Yeah, pretty awesome.

PUB **SCEA** DEV **GUERRILLA GAMES**

BEST SHOOTER Killzone 3

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3
Pub **Activision**
Dev **Infinity Ward/ Sledgehammer Games**

Resistance 3
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Insomniac Games**

> On behalf the entire team at Guerrilla, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the *PlayStation: The Official Magazine* staff for recognizing *Killzone 3* as the best shooter of the year. We're thrilled and humbled by this award: thrilled, because it validates all the hard work we put into *Killzone 3* since we started development back in 2009; and humbled, because 2011 was an outstanding year for first-person shooters on PlayStation 3. We never expected to be picked over so many prolific and long-awaited titles. To receive PTOM's Best Shooter award in the face of such strong competition is truly an honor. Thank you!

Hermen Hulst, Managing Director, Guerrilla Games

BULLSEYE

In a year that featured an epic showdown between two gargantuan combat shooter franchises, it seemed inconceivable that any other game could emerge the victor. But when we considered all the nominees in this hotly contested genre, we agreed that *Killzone 3*—with its riveting campaign, taught multiplayer, and gorgeous graphics—offered 2011's most complete shooter experience. ■

Its riveting campaign, taught multiplayer, and gorgeous graphics offered 2011's most complete shooter experience.

PUB **ELECTRONIC ARTS** DEV **DICE**

BEST MULTIPLAYER Battlefield 3

HONORABLE MENTION

Bulletstorm
Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **People Can Fly/ Epic Games**

> Thank you from the DICE studio in Stockholm! This award is a great honor to us. We have been working really hard to achieve the best *Battlefield* experience to date, and we feel we have a great foundation to keep supporting and evolving *Battlefield 3* in the future. Getting an award like this makes us proud and makes all those late nights in front of the keyboard totally worth it. Thanks again, and hope to see you on the battlefield!

Patrick Bach, Executive Producer, DICE

SEMPER FI

After 2011's barrage of shooters, there's only one we're still playing online. *Battlefield 3*. After all, there's a lot here to love: Unmatched sound quality and character animations, the whooshing sound of jets duking it out in aerial dogfights, bullets whizzing by our heads—er, who are we kidding. Our KDR is far below the skyrocketing blood pressures of those dudes riding in the cockpit of our helicopter. Sorry, guys. We haven't learned how to fly that thing yet. ■

After 2011's barrage of shooters, there's only one we're still playing online. *Battlefield 3*.

PUB **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE** DEV **ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS**

BEST ACTION ADVENTURE

Batman: Arkham City

KNIGHT TIME

When 2009's *Batman: Arkham Asylum* set new standards for the action adventure genre, we knew a sequel would inevitably spawn from its success. But since we considered *Arkham Asylum* to be damn near perfect, we knew such a follow-up would face the monumental challenge of meeting our lofty expectations. Then Rocksteady released *Arkham City* and shattered our idea of "perfection" with a fistful of Dark Knight justice. It was love at first punch. From the game's new open-world setting, to its tight, refined combat, to its huge roster of villains, every element meshed together to form the ultimate crime-fighting package. The hours melded into days and we lost track of how many criminals we had put down under the crushing boots of the Caped Crusader. With this chapter closed, we can't wait to see what's in store for Batman in the future. ■

> It's an honor to be nominated amongst such great games and winning Best Action Adventure game is a proud moment for everyone at Rocksteady, and a testament to all the hard work that the team put in over two-and-a-half years. The PS3 version of *Batman: Arkham City* was very important to everyone at Rocksteady, and the technical team crammed everything they could into the PS3 to deliver the best game possible. Thanks so much from all at Rocksteady for this awesome award!

Jamie Walker, Studio Director, Rocksteady Studios

HONORABLE MENTION

inFamous 2
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Sucker Punch**

"The PS3 version of *Batman: Arkham City* was very important to everyone at Rockstead y."

ALSO RAN... ALSO WON!

BEST TROPHY

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection

"Sexting" Not only does this collection have Trophy support, it's also in touch with today's youth! To score *MGS2*'s "Sexting" Trophy, send Otacon a picture of the marine with no pants from the opening ship sequence.

WORST RELEASE DATE

Rayman Origins

Ubisoft chose November 15 as the release date for *Rayman Origins*, which was practically a death sentence considering the AAA titles it had to compete with–including Ubisoft's own *Assassin's Creed: Revelations!*

PUB **2K SPORTS** DEV **VISUAL CONCEPTS**

BEST SPORTS GAME NBA 2K12

HONORABLE MENTIONS

MLB 11: The Show
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCE San Diego Studio**

FIFA Soccer 12
Pub **EA Sports**
Dev **EA Canada**

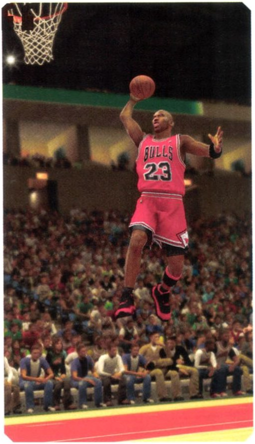
"Wow! Best Sports Game. It's still sinking in for our team here at Visual Concepts and 2K Sports. We'd like to say a big thank you to the fans. Their love of the game and sincere feedback pushes us to new heights every year. It's for the fans, and our deep appreciation for the sport of basketball, that we strive to create the best simulation experience possible. We'd also like to thank the athletes who we share a close relationship with and make themselves available to us, providing their inside knowledge to make the game even better. We'd also like to thank *PlayStation: The Official Magazine* for this award. And finally, a big thank you goes out to our families for their continued support and for tolerating a bunch of sports fanatics. Thank you."

Greg Thomas, President of Product Development, 2K Sports

"[The fans'] love of the game and sincere feedback pushes us to new heights every year."

SLAM DUNK

2K Sports' *NBA 2K11* was already the best basketball game available in 2010, but that's a hollow compliment when there's no competition in the arena. So what do champions do when they can only challenge themselves? Get better anyway—*NBA 2K12* isn't merely the best basketball game ever, it's one of the best sports games ever made. ■



PUB **NAMCO BANDAI** DEV **PROJECT ACES**

BEST VEHICLE GAME Ace Combat: Assault Horizon

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Dirt 3
Pub **Codemasters**
Dev **Codemasters**

Shift 2: Unleashed
Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Slightly Mad Studios**

"Thank you for selecting us as the Best Vehicle Game. *Ace Combat: Assault Horizon* was developed under the premise that 'just maintaining leads to degeneration.' The team gathered all of their courage to make it happen, and we are grateful that *Ace Combat's* rebirth and the team's challenge to see it through were evaluated so positively. We also recognize that not everyone shares the same opinion and there was critical feedback on the game. We promise that all the results, good and bad, that came from *Ace Combat's* rebirth will become our resource. Our challenge will not end. Thank you again!"

Kazutoki Kono, Producer and Executive Director, Project Aces

"The team gathered all of their courage to make it happen."

LOCKED ON TARGET

Reality is overrated. What we, as gamers, really want is action, excitement, and, most importantly, fun. *Ace Combat: Assault Horizon* embraced this fundamental truth with a zeal rarely seen in modern games, and by rejecting flight-sim tedium in favor of pure, weapons-grade fun, the series came roaring back into our regular rotation. Seriously, how could we overlook a game in which helicopters can do *barrel rolls*? Do yourself a favor: strap into the cockpit and join us for some dogfighting. ■

PUB **BETHESDA SOFTWORKS** DEV **BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS**

BEST RPG

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

SKY HIGH

Not many games give us the level of freedom we're afforded by *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*—after all, where else can dress up as a Viking and shout at woodland creatures so hard they catch on fire? The amazing thing about *Skyrim* is we could play through it a dozen times and still not see everything it has to offer. Between its main quest and the civil war between the Stormcloaks and the Imperials, as well as all the guilds to which we can offer our services...well, that doesn't even scratch the game's surface. We've spent hours just exploring its insanely detailed world, pickpocketing villagers, punching them into submission, and clearing out hideouts full of bandits. Oh, and the dragons? Yeah, they're pretty cool, too. ■

> Where else can dress up as a Viking and shout at woodland creatures so hard they catch on fire?

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Mass Effect 2
Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **BioWare**

Dark Souls
Pub **Namco Bandai**
Dev **FromSoftware**

Deus Ex: Human Revolution
Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Eidos Studios-Montreal**

> “Thanks for the support from all the fans and everyone who played *Skyrim*. It's comforting to know that our style of game can still find its place. The response has been amazing, and we're grateful to be recognized with this honor.”
>
> **Todd Howard**,
> Game Director and Executive Producer,
> Bethesda Game Studios

ALSO RAN... ALSO WON!

BEST NEW IP

L.A. Noire
A modern take on a classic genre featuring advanced facial animations and an authentic film noir aesthetic—we see a bright future here, especially with the high-tech facial animations (even though developer Team Bondi recently closed its doors).

BEST COLLECTION

The Ico and Shadow of the Colossus Collection
These Team Ico creations remain just as beautiful, compelling, and relevant today as when they were first released on PS2. This is where games intersect with art.

PUB **UBISOFT** DEV **UBISOFT MONTPELLIER**

BEST PLATFORMER Rayman Origins

HONORABLE MENTIONS

LittleBigPlanet2
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Media Molecule**

El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron
Pub **Ignition Ent.**
Dev **Ignition Tokyo**

> “Thank you very much to *PlayStation: The Official Magazine* for this award. Thanks to everyone who helped make this game possible, for all of their hard work and creativity. We are truly honored to be chosen for this award, especially when you look at some of the great platforming games that came out this year. Finally, thank you to our fans, your support and excitement really keep us motivated every day. We made *Rayman Origins* because we love videogames. We hope that comes through when you play. We believe that is the main thing that links players and the game developers. We have fun making it and we hope you'll have as much fun playing it!”

Michel Ancel,
Creative Director of *Rayman Origins*

ARMLESS FUN

Just when we thought 2D platformers were a dying breed, *Rayman Origins* swept us off our feet and reminded us we don't need a third dimension to have fun. This charming adventure boasts some of slickest platforming around and is bursting with gorgeous hand-drawn environments and characters. If there's a game with more heart than *Origins*, we haven't played it. ■

This charming adventure boasts some of slickest platforming around.

PUB **VALVE** DEV **VALVE**

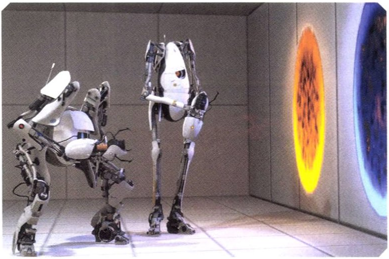
BEST PUZZLE GAME Portal 2

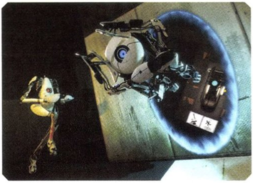
HONORABLE MENTION

Catherine
Pub **Atlus**
Dev **Atlus**

> “On behalf of everyone at Valve, we'd like to say thank you for this award. We put a lot of love and attention into *Portal 2* and we were incredibly happy to bring it to the PlayStation 3 this year.”

Josh Weier,
Project Lead on *Portal 2*





HOLE-Y SMOKES

Classic arcade games like *Pac-Man* and *Tetris* are enduring for a reason: simple yet ingenious mechanics that are easy to understand but difficult to master. The *Portal* games contain that *exact* same sort of genius. While many modern titles rely on flashy set pieces or mindless violence, *Portal 2* simply challenges players to make it from point A to point B in a series of the cleverest puzzles we've ever played. Oh, and GLaDOS and Wheatley are absolutely, genuinely hilarious. What a perfect package. ■

PUB **THQ** DEV **VOLITION**

BEST OPEN-WORLD GAME

Saints Row: The Third

THIRD TIMES A CHARM

With all the great games 2011 delivered unto our collection, it was no surprise that a few of them landed perfect scores. What did surprise us, though, is one of those perfect scores went out to Volition's *Saints Row: The Third*. This was a game that completely caught us off guard; we knew it was going to be zany—nay, downright crazy—but we didn't expect it to capture our attention so thoroughly. It had a fun story, tight shooting, excellent driving mechanics, and a button dedicated to bashing dudes in the nuts. The countless number of outlandish things we did and saw aren't even fit for print, but know this: we never stopped laughing during our time with *The Third*. In a season of self-serious titles, this was one that reminded us that games are meant to be fun. ■

"Choosing *Saints Row: The Third* as the recipient to this award reveals a lot about the staff at PTOM."

> “Wow. This is phenomenal. Thanks. It's great to have been considered and flattering to have won against so many other strong games. We're excited to see this franchise come full circle and be recognized as having its own unique identity within the open-world genre. Choosing *Saints Row: The Third* as the recipient to this award reveals a lot about the staff at PTOM. On behalf of the team we're glad to have given PTOM the opportunity to participate in gameplay you probably wouldn't tell your parents about. Strap it on and we'll see you in *Saints Row 4*. Thanks again.”
>
> **Greg Donovan**, Senior Producer, Volition

HONORABLE MENTIONS

L.A. Noire
Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Team Bondi**

Dead Island
Pub **Deep Silver Games**
Dev **Techland**

ALSO RAN... ALSO WON!

MOST RIDICULOUS TITLE

Prinny 2: Dawn of Operation Panties, Dood!
Okay, we get that the Prinnies are on a mission to recover Demon Lord Etna's stolen panties or risk being turned into panties themselves, but why do they talk like surfers?

WORST GAME

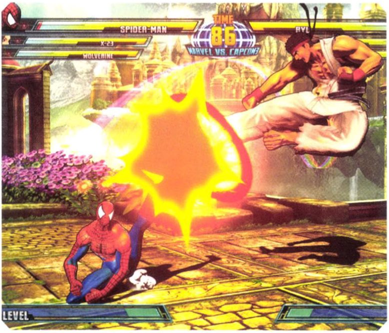
Thor: God of Thunder
It's difficult to fulfill our exceedingly low expectations of movie-to-game adaptations, but the god of blunder managed to do just that with its technical and gameplay incompetence of mythical proportions.

PUB **CAPCOM** DEV **CAPCOM**

BEST FIGHTING GAME Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds

HONORABLE MENTION

Mortal Kombat
Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.**
Dev **NetherRealm Studios**



> “Thank you for choosing *Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds* out of the wealth of titles available! The development team is thrilled that so many users have given their support to this game and all of the playable, popular characters from the Capcom and Marvel universes! Please don’t forget to also check out *Ultimate Marvel Vs. Capcom 3*, now with even more characters (on sale now!) Thank you again!”

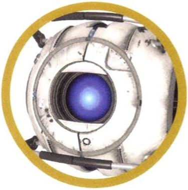
Ryota Niitsuma, Producer of *Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds*

KNOCKOUT

Capcom has been absolutely killing it in the fighting game department these past few years. First they successfully revived *Street Fighter* and now they’ve done the same for *Marvel vs. Capcom*. With its flashy, chaotic action, immense roster of fan-favorite characters, and unique tag-team format, it’s an experience that absolutely anyone can (and should) enjoy. Protip: *Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3* is only $40. ■

First they successfully revived *Street Fighter* and now they’ve done the same for *Marvel vs. Capcom*.

BEST CHARACTER Nathan Drake (Uncharted 3)



HONORABLE MENTIONS

Professor Genki
Saints Row: The Third

Wheatley
Portal 2

Vincent
Catherine

STAR POWER

Nathan Drake could have once been characterized as a mere Indiana Jones knockoff, but that time has long passed. Each new installment of the *Uncharted* franchise reveals ever more depth and complexity; the image of the reckless adventurer has slowly transformed to hint at a tortured, obsessed soul. His feats of daring and survivability verge on unbelievable, but he remains gaming’s everyman: an imperfect, relatable hero we’d love to hang out with... Except when he’s on any form of transportation, of course—that just seems to lead to trouble. ■

The image of the reckless adventurer has slowly transformed to hint at a tortured, obsessed soul.

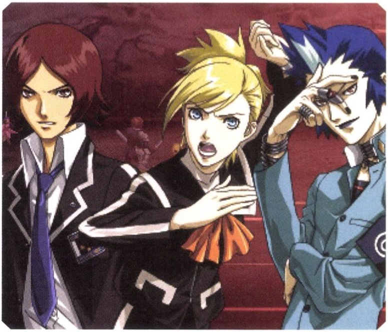
PUB **ATLUS** DEV **ATLUS**

PSP GAME OF THE YEAR Persona 2: Innocent Sin

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Patapon 3
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Pyramid/SCE Japan Studio**

Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together
Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **ArtDink/Square Enix**



SINFULLY GOOD

We've seen the PSP become a haven for JRPG titles, but none so prominent as the *Persona* series. The enhanced port of the 12-year-old *Persona 2: Innocent Sin* has a more accessible UI and much-improved graphics. The story is darkly addicting and like the series' other titles, hardcore JRPG fans like us can't get enough. Plus, we get to fight Hitler! ■

> “When you're a small videogame publisher with an extremely dedicated legion of fans, it is exceedingly difficult to receive countless localization requests and be unable to accommodate all of them. That is why it is such a singular thrill for us to have been able to finally bring *Persona 2: Innocent Sin* to North America.
>
> We're honored the game is receiving such tremendous recognition. *Persona 2: Innocent Sin*, despite having originally been released over a decade ago, represents to us that rare mix of greatness: a heavy, emotion-filled narrative; deep game mechanics laden with strategy; and a visual and aural presentation that easily stands the test of time.”

Aram Jabbari, Manager of Public Relations and Sales, Atlus

PUB **PLAYDEAD** DEV **PLAYDEAD**

PSN GAME OF THE YEAR Limbo

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Outland
Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Housemarque**

Section 8: Prejudice
Pub **TimeGate**
Dev **TimeGate**

> “Thank you, we're honored and very happy to receive such a prestigious award!”

Dino Patti,
CEO and co-founder of PlayDead,
man of few words

COLOR US THINK

What's black and white and dead all over? Well, us while playing *Limbo*. But despite all the hidden traps, giant spiders, and whirring blades that consistently cut our journey short, we were completely captivated by the game's haunting duochrome aesthetics and elegant platforming mechanics, brilliant in their simplicity. Everything from the moving score to the mysterious story helped cultivate an ethereal experience unlike anything else on PS3, and though it arrived late on PSN, we'd be remiss not to recognize its remarkable uniqueness. Now quit trying to make us feel feelings! ■

PUB **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENT.** DEV **ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS**

PS3 GAME OF THE YEAR

Batman: Arkham City

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Naughty Dog**

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
Pub **Bethesda Softworks**
Dev **Bethesda Game Studios**

"Best PS3 game of the year? How good is that?! I've always said that PTOM has the smartest, best looking, and most cleverest readers and journos in the entire industry and now you've proved it. As a reward for your impeccable taste, here's confirmation of one of the big secrets of *Batman: Arkham City*. If you haven't finished the game then stop reading now. **WARNING: SPOILERS AHEAD!!!**

So, did you think The Joker was actually going to die in the end? Or is he, in fact, even dead? There's been quite a bit of speculation that The Joker somehow survived. Was there an off-camera switcheroo just before Batman walked out of the Monarch Theatre? Was Batman in fact carrying out Clayface (impersonating The Joker)?

So I thought I'd take this opportunity to clear up any confusion once and for all: I can confirm that everyone's favorite enigmatic, charismatic, psychopathic, sociopathic killer is indeed dead. Dead. Dead. Dead. At least he was when Batman last checked. Thanks again for the incredible award, and much love to all your readers!"

Sefton Hill, Game Director

HE RULES THE NIGHT

We know what you're thinking: What about *Uncharted 3*? Trust us, this wasn't an easy decision. We locked ourselves in a room and engaged in a verbal battle so powerful we're lucky Roger didn't accidentally Fus Do Rah anyone to death. In the end, we left that room alive, our sun-starved skin and tattered clothing a testament to our heated debate.

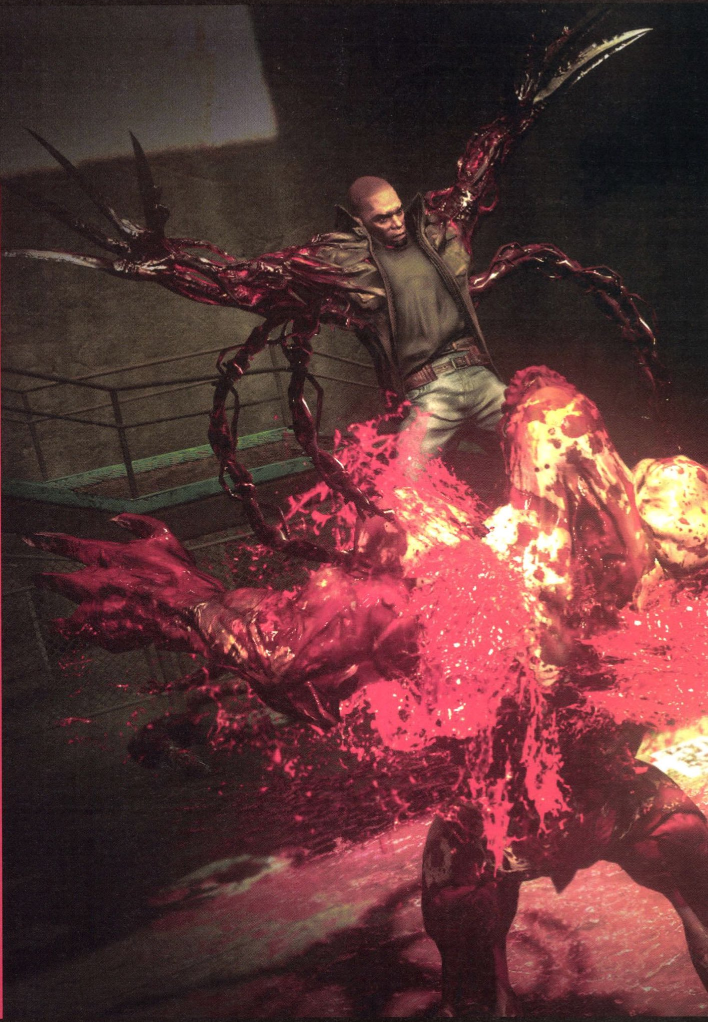
Batman: Arkham City has emerged victorious as our Game of the Year, and rightfully so. *Uncharted 3* and *Skyrim* were both strong contenders—there's no denying they're some of the best games we've ever experienced. But there was something about *Arkham City* that we just couldn't shake. We'll never forget the feeling of soaring as Batman through Arkham's stagnant air, or the slick fluidity of pulling off merciless, brutal combos. Most importantly, we'll never forget how thoroughly it shattered our expectations. *Arkham City* is a milestone not only for 2011, but also for videogames as a medium. Is it any wonder, then, that it won our coveted Game of the Year award? We think not. ■

[ARMYOF1]

A city in ruin, a family torn apart, and a man with the power to set it right. We go hands-on with humanity's next super weapon in **Prototype 2**.

by Scott Butterworth

Format **PS3** ETA **April** Pub **Activision** Dev **Radical Entertainment**



Ask a Dev

What's one common aspect of open-world games that you hate?

Dave Fracchia, Studio VP

"One thing I hate is if the open world is dead. It's just not alive or there is nothing to do in it. I don't want to pull up any games as examples, but there are some I've played where I'm like, 'What's there to do out here?' That's the hard thing to do these days: keeping them interested and keeping them aligned with what's going on in the story."

Matt Armstrong, Design Director

"For me, one of the things to try to avoid is any kind of generic content. I'm not a fan of things that are just rubberstamps throughout the world that are time-wasters. If it's in an open world, I'd like it to have some kind of meaningful value. For me, that comes back to the character or personality side of things."

▲ Sure the game is bloody and brutal, but the devs promise it also packs "wry, tongue-in-cheek humor."

Radical Entertainment's Studio VP Dave Fracchia is not a man to be trifled with. "I always say that—maybe because I'm Italian and maybe because I'm armed—if someone took out my family, nothing would stop me from taking that person out. There's nothing else to live for at that point." Intimidating? Sure. But NRA membership aside, he has a point. "Whether you have children or not, you can relate to something being taken away that's incredibly important. It's such an identifiable character."

This, above all else, is the driving idea behind *Prototype 2* and its new protagonist, James Heller. In the original *Prototype*, we controlled shape-shifting superhuman Alex Mercer, who gained god-like speed, strength, and durability after infecting himself with the man-made Blacklight virus. He could morph his arms into giant blades, rip the guns off of tanks, sprint up the sides of buildings, and even consume people for health and a new physical appearance. Mercer *was* the weapon. Of course, he was also kind of a dick.

"[Mercer] was somebody who didn't have a clear goal, and it was really hard to get behind his agenda because nobody really knew what the agenda was in the first place," admits Design Director Matt Armstrong. "The player comes into *Prototype 2* with a very strong understanding of why [Heller] is who he is and what he is ultimately aiming to achieve." And what *is* Heller trying to achieve? In short: vengeance. Though he eventually shares most of Mercer's physical abilities, his motivation is far more human.

Sick to Death

As the game's opening credits roll over somber black-and-white imagery, we hear a moving series of phone calls between Heller—who, at the time, is deployed in Iraq—and his wife back in New York, where a second outbreak of the Blacklight virus is quickly turning the city into a contaminated wasteland filled with flesh-hungry monsters called Infected. He reassures her, telling her the government will surely protect their family, yet when he returns on leave just a few days later, he finds both his wife and daughter brutally murdered. Naturally, he blames the man supposedly responsible for unleashing the virus: Alex Mercer.

Though Heller is honorably discharged following the death of his family, his guilt and rage drive him to re-enlist and join the effort to take back New York, volunteering for every suicide mission available. This is where our hands-on experience begins. While the majority of the game drops players into an open, urban sandbox, the more tightly scripted intro sequence—set in a particularly overrun portion of the city—contains two crucial moments: First, a nail-biting chase that forces us to outrun a *massive* Infected (we're guessing he'll turn up again later for an actual boss fight), and second, our first encounter with Mercer himself.

After squaring off in a quick-time event, he plunges his tendrils deep into our chest, infecting us with his special brand of the Blacklight virus. In a way, Mercer actually turns Heller into his own personal prototype.

▲ Story getting a little too tough? Take up side missions by hacking into a Blacknet truck and tracking down whomever it spits out.

▲ The story features only "limited branching," but we have the freedom to choose the missions we want to tackle and in what order, just like *Grand Theft Auto*.

He then claims he's not responsible for the outbreak, but rather the entire catastrophe is a bio-weapons experiment being conducted by Gentek—the creators of the virus—and their nefarious Blackwatch soldiers. Then, just when we thought we'd seen every curveball, he asks us to help him stop them. Whether we can trust (much less forgive) Mercer is unclear, but one thing's for certain: Gentek is evil as hell.

New York Zero

Once we escape from Mercer, we're finally free to explore *Prototype 2's* revamped New York City, which, unlike last game, has been divided into three distinct zones. While the Green Zone pretty much represents life as usual, the Red Zone has been plunged into abject chaos. Infected crowd the streets, buildings lie overgrown with bizarre organic matter, and military jeeps can be seen patrolling every alleyway. The Yellow Zone, naturally, falls somewhere in between. Though relatively safe, Blackwatch has set up checkpoints to harass and intimidate the locals. The whole place is essentially quarantined while authorities scan and detain civilians at will.

This stirring portrayal of a police state helps cultivate a believable atmosphere of paranoia and uncertainty that's far more palpable than anything in the original *Prototype*. "Our reasoning from the first game was: you're moving at a hundred miles an hour so what the characters on the ground are doing was less important. But we have found that it really is quite important that you feel immersed in the city and feel that sense of purpose," explains Fracchia. "There was a lot about the first game that felt somewhat sterile and generic, to be perfectly honest," agrees Armstrong, "but this time around I think...it feels like a game that is full of character and personality."

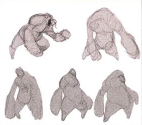
Since the Green and Red zones are locked at the beginning of the game, we spend a few minutes exploring the Yellow Zone's prison camps and skyscrapers using Heller's liberating traversal abilities. As fans of the first game know, that means automatically parkour-ing over obstacles, sprinting freely up the sides of buildings, performing lightning-fast air dashes, and gliding through the air without any fear of fall damage should we choose to drop back down to earth—basically everything short of flying like Superman.

Ultimate Predator

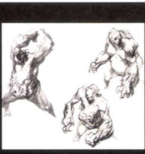
While diving off buildings and sprinting through traffic could probably entertain us for hours, we eventually decide to track down the game's first mission-giver: a sassy priest named Father Guerra. Though his cartoonish use of words like *"puto"* is a bit off-putting, he helps us create a plan of action, and for the first few missions, we track down and consume Blackwatch soldiers so we can read their memories and verify Mercer's claims. To do this, we use one of Heller's new

Birth of a Monster

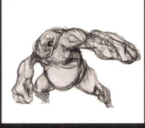
What does it take to bring one of *Prototype 2's* Infected to life? Here's an inside look at every step in the process.



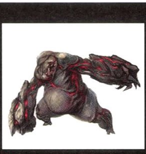
1. Initial rough sketch



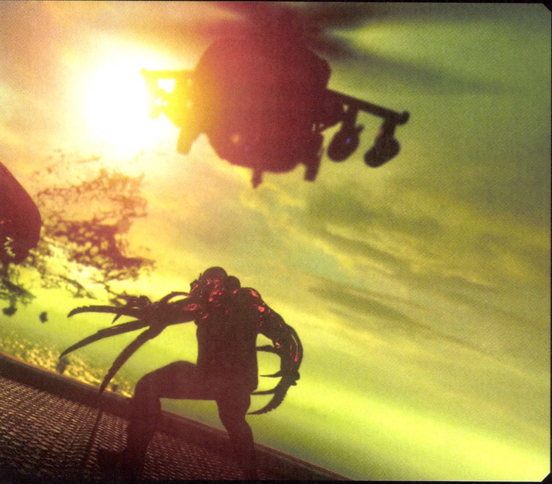
2. Thumbnail variations



3. Final rough sketch



4. Full color sketch



Oh, the violence is awesome, but it's not everything. Heller can also mimic an enemy's appearance and go full stealth.

abilities: Hunter Pulse, which is basically a real-time radar system that darkens the screen and sends out a ring of light that pings off distant targets.

Though Heller starts the game with a few abilities like this, most of his moves will have to be unlocked gradually. "We've done a substantially better job this time of layering this stuff and basically pacing the delivery of it into the players hands so that they always feel rewarded instead of drowned in a bucket of cool," Armstrong assures us. Take Heller's claws, for example. After spending the first few missions armed only with our fists, we eventually encounter and consume a particularly nasty Infected, and boom—we inherit a new weapon.

And it's important to note that when we do gain the claws, combat becomes far more fun. While throwing punches felt a little slow and awkward, using the claws allowed us to dart around the screen with ease—once we adjusted to the game's newly improved targeting system, that is. "In the first game, the combat could be incredibly chaotic," says Armstrong. "We did a poor job in the first game of actually communicating cues and letting the player know when they're going to be attacked versus when they're reasonably safe to launch into their own attacks. One of the pushes from the outset was to make sure the combat in *Prototype 2* was a lot more readable." In other words, no more off-screen attacks or unbreakable combos.

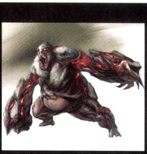
The controls are more intuitive as well. Of the five weapons we'll eventually have access to (claws, hammerfists, whipfists, blade arm, and tendrils), we can now map any two to the Square and Triangle buttons to dual-wield abilities, and each weapon features unique finishing moves and different attacks based on whether the button is held or tapped, and whether the move is launched in the air or on the ground.

Destruction Made Simple

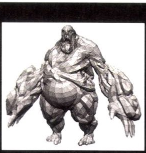
Prototype 2's combat is far more than generic action game buttonmashing, though. In fact, the seemingly unlimited ways Heller can wreak havoc really helps set the experience apart from other games. After our encounter with the claws, the developers jumped us to a point near the end of the game, which not only allowed us to max out Heller's stats using the extremely streamlined upgrade system (which features just six categories) but also gave us an opportunity to be fully immersed in the game's most chaotic moments.

With both Infected monsters and Blackwatch tanks streaming through the crowded streets, we felt strangely at ease, confident in our near invincibility. And then we got to work, ensnaring enemies with our tendrils, hurling cars at helicopters, ripping the cannons off of tanks, turning Infected into "bio-bombs" that release their own explosion of tendrils, diving onto soldiers and surfing their bodies down the street, wielding a stolen chaingun against the thrashing mob, calling in a pack of loyal Infected to attack for us, and deflecting missiles with our bare hands.

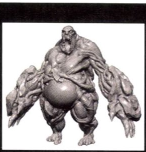
Heller's basic weapons-based attacks are plenty fun, but the sheer badassery of all his other abilities really makes the experience sing. "I have my choice of how I want to solve a problem, and the game will respond to whatever my choice is," enthuses Fracchia. "It's that feeling of being as powerful and as strategic as I want to be. Or if I want to just mess up sh–t, I can go ahead and do that." Now that's something we can identify with.



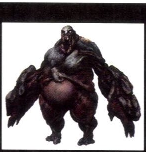
5. Final concept



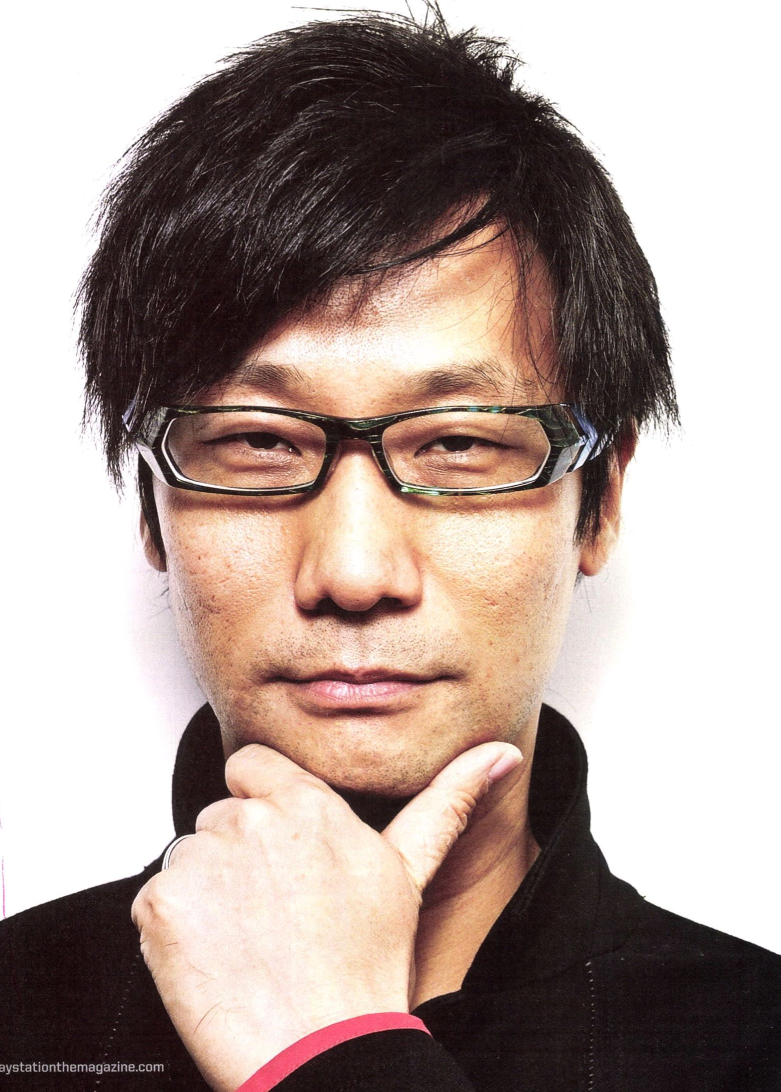
6. Low detail 3D sculpture



7. High detail 3D sculpture



8. The final product



"Snake was supposed to die."

When **Hideo Kojima** speaks, we listen. The *Metal Gear Solid* creator discusses the series' past, present, and future in his most candid interview ever.

BY JOEL GREGORY

Yes, Snake—protagonist in PlayStation's most acclaimed series—was supposed to die in *Metal Gear Solid 4*. It's quite the bold statement to make about one of gaming's most beloved characters. And his creator, Hideo Kojima, follows it up with something even bolder: "Actually, I wanted to end it at every step along the way." Wow. If we'd made something so revered and successful the world over, we'd ride it into the ground, license a spin-off animated series, and go around wearing branded clothing every day. But not Kojima. The guiding mind behind *MGS* has wanted to off his leading man for nearly a decade and a half.

Found in Translation

We're in Konami's HQ in Tokyo Midtown, and have been given unprecedented access to one of the most respected game developers working today. The building itself is strangely modern and ultra-neat in a sort of stereotype-conforming way, but there's nothing reserved about our time with Kojima: everything past and present—and just a tantalizing hint of the future—is up for discussion.

First, there's the whole 'killing Snake' thing to clarify. Having been so keen to hide his leading man in a box permanently, what stopped him? "In *Guns of the Patriots* he was supposed to die, but everyone on the staff really wanted to keep him alive, so I caved a little," says Kojima. It's not the kind of statement we expect from a man famed for his auteur style of game-making and forthright ideas. But uncovering a little about the person behind the games reveals someone who aims to please more than we'd imagined—sometimes to the detriment of his own creativity. "I did have the feeling that I wanted to end the series, but looking back at it now as a producer, I think as long as people want to keep on playing it, I want to keep on meeting that demand, so I don't think it's a bad thing. But as a creator, I would rather pass it off to someone else."

The creator/producer divide is one that comes up repeatedly—there's a clear compartmentalizing of his roles when it comes to game development. On one hand he's the brilliant mind that came up with revolutionary game mechanics—such as the now legendary controller-swapping battle with Psycho Mantis in the first *MGS*—and on the other, he's a man who's something of a slave to his own success. And it's clear, as our time together goes on, which part he prefers to play: "I have a lot of other things that I want to do."

But—although we might not know it from the stories he weaves about DNA-splicing and super-powered undead soldiers—there's a realism underlying Kojima's creations. "I'm a creator at heart, but at the same time I also have to manage the business aspect of it, figure out how to sell the game. I'm still trying to find that balance—it's very delicate. How do you put in enough to make sure it sells, while remaining true to your vision?" There's a sense of loyalty to his long-term employer, Konami, and also to a seriously dedicated fanbase.

Patriot Games

Given the critical and commercial success of the latest two *MGS* games—2010 PSP effort *Peace Walker* and 2008 PS3 outing *Guns of the Patriots*—it's unlikely that the clamor for new sneak-'em-ups is going to die down anytime soon. But what would happen to the series if he decided to walk away? "Just to make things clear, it's not that I don't like the *Metal Gear* series," he says. "If I had an unlimited amount of time, or some kind of magic that let me double the amount of hours I had in a day, I would love to keep making *Metal Gear* as well as something new. But as a creator I want to move on, do something new, and have the younger staff take over."

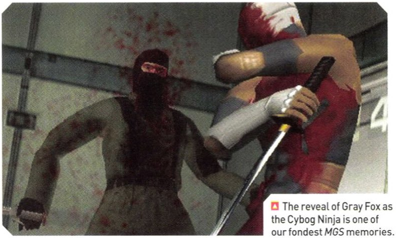
Sitting in front of the legend himself. Just chatting.

It's a situation that we're already seeing come to fruition in *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* [now being handled by developer PlatinumGames]. The game, starring *MGS2* lead Raiden, could hardly be a more radical departure from previous *Metal Gears* in gameplay terms. What in the past has been about stealth, patience, and avoiding combat wherever possible has now become a furiously paced action game in which combat is king. Wielding a katana at lightning speed and with perfect precision, we have to slice parts from enemies using our amateur surgery skills to retrieve life-giving cyborg giblets from within.

Although it's a huge leap from the traditional gameplay style, this is still a game set in the *Metal Gear* universe, utilizing the same ethos and characters. And yet it's the first non-portable game in the series that Kojima is neither writing nor directing. A difficult decision, surely? "It's not like I'm giving up complete control. It's that point in the beginning—the core concept, finding that seed. So the concept came from the staff—they got the idea to use Raiden as the main character and to make it into an action game. But very early on I set boundaries and I gave some feedback."

Yet while *Rising* may not feel like classic *Metal Gear*, it will stay true to the series: "If

Hiding in boxes has saved our asses more times than we can count.



The reveal of Gray Fox as the Cybog Ninja is one of our fondest *MGS* memories.

“I’d rather pass the series off to someone else.”

A LITTLE BIRD...

Always one to embrace new technology, Hideo Kojima has become something of a Twitter legend among game devs. He teases his 75,000+ followers with mentions of Project Ogre, plus pics of progress with the *MGS HD Collection* (as well as commenting on the bust size of the new Meryl figurine). But more than anything—so much so we’ve started joking about it in the office—he tweets about food. In fact, he posts pictures of seemingly every meal he eats, all of which look delicious. Become a follower and you’ll view more pictures of noodles and sushi than ever before. See for yourself: **@Hideo_Kojima_EN**

MEETING KOJIMA

No offense to my eminent colleagues, but it's not every day that you get to come face-to-face with an industry legend. So I was a bit nervous when it came to spending a long period of time with such a revered man. Especially one known for being quite...intense.

As with anyone of that stature, there's something of a circus that surrounds him—three PR prepping rooms, bringing coffee and so on, plus a translator—but this never comes across as a diva's entourage, just people facilitating the life of a very busy man.

Easy Company

Talking to him, while he certainly is focused and intelligent, soon becomes a fairly relaxed and enjoyable experience. Clearly—and justifiably—proud of his past creations, he talks candidly about what was done right and wrong, happy to laugh at any missteps along the way. It's also clear that there are a million and one ideas still buzzing around his head: things that he would have included in previous games if he could, things he hopes to use in the future or just generally cool ideas for games. There seems to be a slight sadness that success has made his life more complex, and with so many things to juggle he can no longer simply focus on one project and put everything into it, as he'd love to do.

But despite any frustrations there's an enthusiasm there. He messes around getting me to take photos with him, and can't stop showing off his prototype *MGS* iPhone case—which is refreshing, especially for someone of 48 (although he looks at least 15 years younger) who's been in the industry for so long.

there's something I feel crosses a line and goes against everything *Metal Gear* is, then I'll say something. But as much as possible I try to preserve the boundary. Even the story: I try not to read it, because if I do then I'll want to say something and get sucked back in again!"

Raiden Tested

One issue that *Rising* raises once again is that of replacing grizzled vet Snake with flaxen-haired pretty boy Raiden. A controversial and shock choice as the lead of *MGS2*, he returned seven years later with a cyborg overhaul to play the role of a savior in times of crisis. "Raiden in *MGS4* was received very well, and I wanted to keep going with that direction in *Rising*. The people who liked him in *4* will like him in this, but it's a personal preference."

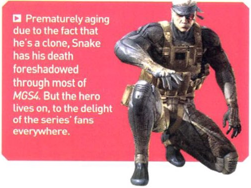
As, undoubtedly, will be the new style of gameplay. And while we, as open-minded sorts, are ready to embrace next year's sword-and-slaughter fest, concerns have already been raised by hardcore *Metal Gear*-heads. "If somebody thinks 'I love Snake' and just really wants traditional stealth gameplay and that experience, then it may be hard to get into *Rising*," responds Kojima. "But for people who are more open and willing to try new things, it shouldn't be a problem."

Old Snake

And what of the decision to replace Snake in *Sons of Liberty*, something that still rankles with certain grudge-holding fans? Well, Kojima's got a fairly watertight justification: "The character in the game is supposed to equal the player, so if you want to introduce things to a new recruit, you have to learn how to interact with that world along with the character. If we had Snake, he was this old, experienced veteran and there would've been a disconnect with the [new] players. So that's why we brought in Raiden."

Examining past games offers some insight into how Kojima works, and how he views development in general. For a man who has a reputation for meticulous attention to detail, it's surprising to learn that there was "no firm design document" for the first game—but less so to hear of the need to instill his work with personal ideals. "I put everything into each of my games," he says. "It's 100 percent my worldview. At the same time, there are other things going on aside from the story, and that has to work well together with the gameplay. With the gameplay I like to get feedback, to get opinions. It's finding that balance—the worldview versus the gameplay."

Speaking of the past also reveals a nostalgic side to Kojima, who says that his first PlayStation creations were "very different to today's games. Now there's a lot of pressure—back then it was very free." There's also evident concern about how that increased pressure is affecting the industry, particularly in his homeland. "It's much more competitive now: if you look at triple-A titles on a worldwide scale there's maybe only 10 really big games that can get gamers' attention, and I'm not sure how Japan can compete on that level." But unlike many, who view the massive financial pressures of development as responsible for this shrunken market and conveyor belt of sequels, Kojima sees it differently. "I think it's more consumer demand. Right now, consumers are happy with what they have. First-person shooters sell like crazy, so there's not a strong demand for anything else, and that's why [original ideals] stop being made. People are satisfied with making minor upgrades and tweaking things—as long as that's the landscape, it will keep on happening. I don't see a problem necessarily, but at the same time it is nice to see new things come."



Prematurely aging due to the fact that he's a clone, Snake has his death foreshadowed through most of *MGS4*. But the hero lives on, to the delight of the series' fans everywhere.

Robo-helper Metal Gear Mk II is a cute little fella.

> **"I'm a creator at heart, but I also have to manage the business aspect of it."**

While he has a history of making a success of something new—both *MGS* and *Zone of the Enders* were incredibly fresh at the time—the realities of doing so have now changed. "Maybe for new ideas, the way to do it is releasing things via online services first and then seeing how people react to that. Or, even if you're making something from a game-design perspective that's completely different, you could tie it to an existing franchise—like even if it had the *Metal Gear Solid* title, it could be completely different. Making something that's completely new—where the gameplay, the characters, the world, everything is completely from scratch—that's very hard to realize in this day and age."

Five's Alive

But "hard to realize" has never been something that's put Kojima off, and with everyone relaxed as our time together comes to an end, it's time to gently probe as to what challenges he's undertaking for the future. Those who follow him on Twitter will be familiar with his teases about the so-called "Ogre" project he's working on, but what exactly is it?

"I can't really say too much about that project yet, but it's a very subdued experience—it's a little bit different to what I've done up until now," he says. "On the surface it will look similar, but once you get into it, it will be a different experience—and I'm hoping people look forward to that. But the Ogre project is going to take a lot of time, so I want to produce some other things on the side, like I'm doing with *Rising*."

One definite thing: it's not *MGS5*, but surely Snake will be making a comeback sooner or later? "Well, I think we'll probably have to make it at some point, but when that will be, we have no idea. As far as my involvement in the project is concerned, it probably won't be as much as it was with *MGS1*—maybe I can do just one stage! For *MGS1* I made the maps myself, laid out the enemy routes myself, did everything hands-on—that level I can't do again."

Don't bet on it: he said exactly the same about *MGS4*. "I intended to take it to a certain point and then hand it off, but that didn't work, because it's hard to convey the concept to other people then have them take the reins and carry on and preserve that vision. That's why it's easier to have them come up with everything from the start and then take it to the end." So despite all the talk of killing his lead, the smart money says we'll see one last *MGS* hurrah from the big man himself.

Creatively frustrated he may be, but it's clear that one of our industry's true innovators—one of very few who genuinely deserves the title of "genius"—is far from out of ideas. This is a man who has put every fiber of his being into games that will forever be ingrained in our minds and hearts. And of his legacy when it does finally come time to leave? "I feel that *Metal Gear Solid* can continue without me, but it will be different. It's still *Metal Gear*—it's just not my *Metal Gear*." The series, like the gaming world in general, won't be the same without him.

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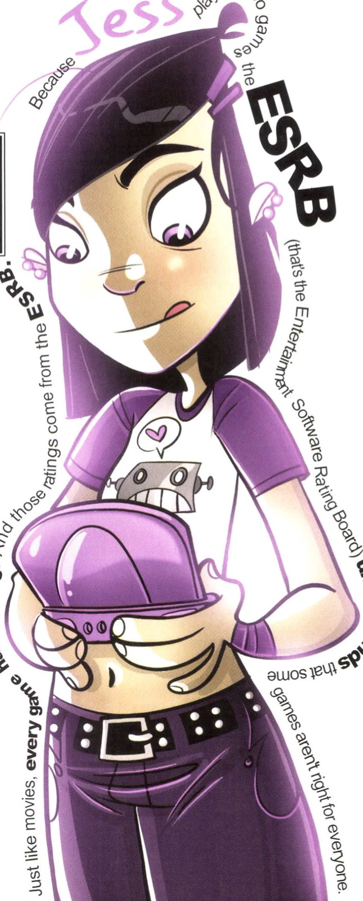
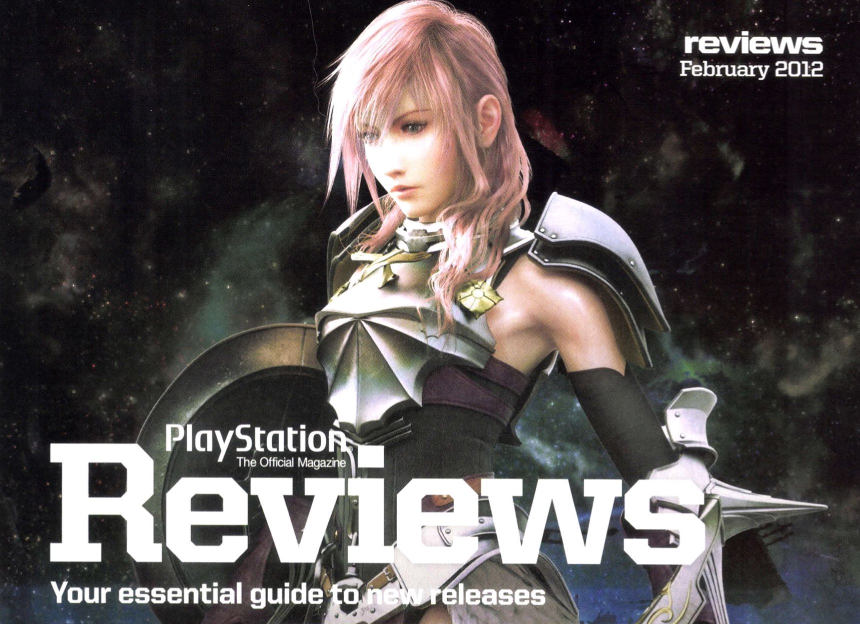


Because **Jess** plays video games the **ESRB** (that's the Entertainment Software Rating Board) **understands** that some games aren't right for everyone.

Just like movies, **every game has a rating.** And those ratings come from the **ESRB.**

www.ESRB.org



PlayStation The Official Magazine

Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

The origin of the *Final Fantasy* franchise is perhaps one of the most unexpected stories in all of gaming. Way back in 1987, series creator Square was just about ready to close its doors, with flagging sales and internal strife threatening the company's very existance. In a last ditch effort to produce a successful game, series creator Hironobu Sakaguchi gave the world the original *Final Fantasy*. Being less than optimistic about the title's prospects, he actually included "final" in the title.

Lucky for the world, the game did succeed, selling a reported 400,000 copies upon its initial release. Now, nearly 25 years later, the franchise is a tent-pole title for the PlayStation platform and one of the most influential series of all time. And now the latest incarnation—*Final Fantasy XIII-2*—carries on the tradition of introspective heroes doing their best to manage the fate of the world.

Not all games enjoy the same kind of last minute success, however. Take *Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath*, for example. When it launched back in 2005, this quirky little adventure barely sold and was all but forgotten. Maybe now's a good time to help change its fate.

THE ADVENTURES OF TINTIN: THE GAME

When a game's title ends with "*The Game*," it's usually a bad sign, but this action-platformer ain't half bad.

JURASSIC PARK: THE GAME

Uh, remember what we said about games with titles that end with "*The Game*"? Well...

INVIZIMALS: SHADOW ZONE

Sure *Shadow Zone* is an oddly sinister sounding subtitle for a kids' game, but hey, if we've earned anything today, we should be glad it's not *The Game*.

How we score our reviews...

10 Awesome Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.

9 Excellent Highly recommended and a great investment.

8 Great Wonderful yet possesses minor flaws.

7 Good Enjoyable but with definite room for improvement.

6 Acceptable A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Mediocre A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Flawed Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.

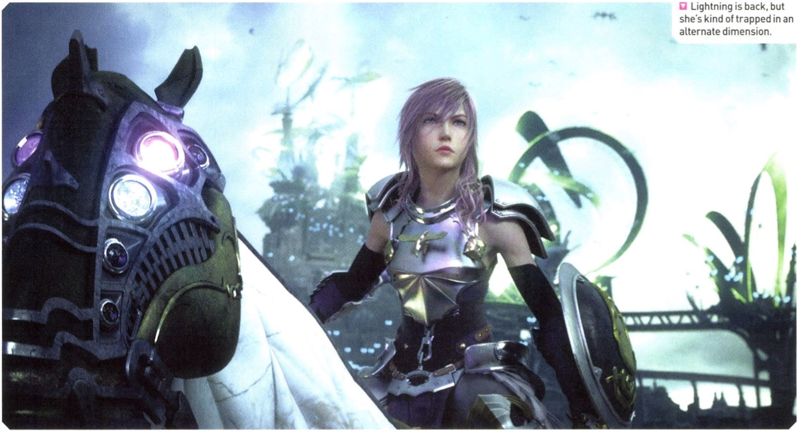
3 Poor A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.

1 Raw Sewage Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD PlayStation

Our Highest Accolade The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.



Lightning is back, but she's kind of trapped in an alternate dimension.

Final Fantasy XIII-2

A brighter future for JRPGs

Info

Format PS3
Pub Square Enix
Dev Square Enix
Price $59.99
ESRB Teen
It's like traveling through time, but without a DeLorean.

In every discussion we've ever had about *Final Fantasy XIII*, one word has repeatedly come up: linear. While many *Final Fantasy* fans were enamored with *XIII's* new direction despite its faults, a substantial number of gamers were appalled by its straightforward layout; the absence of towns and a world map—or, perhaps more accurately, the complete lack of even the illusion of freedom—deviated so far from the traditional JRPG formula that some began to lose faith in the franchise. Well, Square Enix noticed. Remember those levels that felt like never-ending corridors? Gone.

Final Fantasy XIII-2 addresses many of the concerns players had about the last game and therefore serves as a great follow-up. The new characters—especially Noel and the ultra-villain Caius—are some of the best we've seen since *Final Fantasy X*. The story, unlike *XIII's* convoluted tale of the god-like fal'Cie and their damning Focuses, is digestible and fully explained by the time the credits roll. As for the level design: environments are far more open. There are towns. There are side quests. There is...time travel. Yes—*time* travel. In fact, it's *XIII-2's* primary exploration mechanic, and it plays a huge role throughout the course of the game's narrative. The transition to a new story in an old world is mostly painless thanks to a beginner's primer that recounts the events of the previous game. Even those who haven't played or finished *XIII* will have little issue jumping right into the sequel.

A Timely Tale

It all begins in the beach town of New Bodhum. Here we are introduced to

Timeline Revisiting PlayStation's *Final Fantasy* classics

1997

Final Fantasy VII
(PSone)
Perhaps the series' most iconic title, *FFVII's* awesome story, characters, and music set the bar high.

1999

Final Fantasy VIII
(PSone)
This game introduced the Junction system, allowing players to customize the strengths of each character.

2000

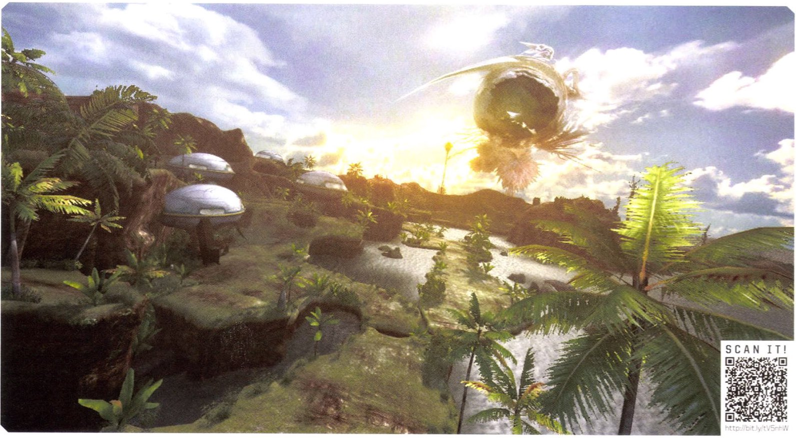
Final Fantasy IX
(PSone)
Made as a "reflection" on the older titles of the franchise, this masterpiece was brimming with charm.

2001

Final Fantasy X
(PS2)
This was the first *Final Fantasy* game on PS2, and also the first to include voice acting.

2003

Final Fantasy X-2
(PS2)
This was the first direct sequel to a *Final Fantasy* game and the only to have an all-female cast.



SCAN IT!

http://bit.ly/tV5nhW

▲ A crystalized Cocoon looms in the distance.

our protagonists: Serah, who is searching for her sister Lightning, and Noel, the last surviving human being from an apocalyptic future. Noel promises Serah that if she accompanies him through time to prevent the impending extinction of mankind, she just might find her sister along the way. This journey has a rather selfish beginning: Serah wants nothing more than to reunite with her family. The fact that she's helping Noel save the world in the process plays second fiddle to her own desires. Ultimately, though, the characters mature, and their quest becomes a selfless one. By the end, we became immensely attached to them. It's a dark tale rife with more emotional moments than we've seen in the franchise in a long, long time.

Transitioning between the game's environments is done via the Historia Crux—a time traveling hub that acts as a world map. Using it, we journeyed to a variety of locations, and, eventually, even explored alternate time periods and parallel realities of a single area. Every zone is meticulously detailed. From the serene beaches of New Bodhum to the futuristic, *Tron*-inspired Augusta Tower, we spent a lot of time navigating places bursting with vibrant colors and awe-inspiring beauty. But exploration yielded more than just eye candy. We discovered many side quests along the way, which, when completed, scored us Fragments—collectibles that provide further context or background information for certain characters or story-related events. Unfortunately, these side quests offered little more than a distraction from our main task. Most of them were trivial fetch quests or monster-hunting contracts, and we became overwhelmed by their sheer number and mind-numbing objectives ▶▶

Fighting for the Future

The heroes and their nemesis

SERAH

Others presume Lightning is trapped within the crystal pillar holding Cocoon, but Serah believes she's still alive.

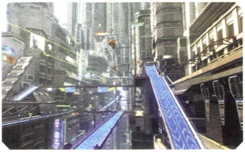
NOEL

A time-traveling hunter, Noel comes from a barren future where all of mankind has been wiped out.

CAIUS

Though his motivations are unknown, Caius is hell bent on rewriting history to destroy all life. He also wields a badass sword.

It would appear that arm rope...things...are a popular fashion trend.



> *XIII-2* is the non-linear installment fans have been hoping for.

that we eventually abandoned them altogether.

There was more to exploration than just these optional missions, however. We also uncovered optional time gates that we unlocked with hidden keys called Artefacts. Once we spent some time searching for them, we were rewarded with access to all sorts of previously locked areas, some of which contained powerful items and weapons. Considering the number of times we found ourselves fending off waves of vicious monsters hungry for their next meal, we were happy to get our hands on all the weapons we could find.

Paradigm Paradox

The Paradigm battle system from *XIII* makes a return here, with one huge change: we can capture monsters by defeating them in battle and then slot them in as our third party member. Each monster fulfills only one combat role. A green chocobo, for example, makes a powerful medic but cannot be used as a magic-casting ravager or a hard-hitting commando. Some monsters are more powerful than others, and we could further enhance our favorites by having them "absorb" weaker creatures, granting them new skills. Being able to capture and use more than 150 different monsters was pretty awesome, but it became a double-edged sword: While we enjoyed adding creatures to our collection, we never felt as attached to them as we did to our characters.

The Paradigm battle system still feels pretty fresh, but it has an inherent flaw: the auto-attack command, which selects the most optimal attack inputs for our characters. We were okay with the fact that most fights with average enemies devolved into us just mashing the X button until we won, but even most *boss* fights played out this same way, eliminating the strategic elements the Paradigm system first introduced. Occasionally our buttonmashing was interrupted by awkward quick time-events (known here as Cinematic Action events). Failing these sequences had adverse affects, such as damaging our HP, but most felt contrived. There were a few, however, that were worthwhile. During one boss fight, we were given the choice to execute our enemy or spare his life. Having mere seconds to make such a

Expect to see a few cameo appearances from the cast of *Final Fantasy XIII*.

Five Big Changes in FFXIII-2

JUMPING

It's a simple addition, really, but the ability to freely jump at any time is a welcome change. We even found some hidden treasure by jumping onto ledges!

LIVE TRIGGER

These events occur pretty regularly in the form of dialog trees. They allow us to choose how to respond to other characters or how we want to approach certain situations.

MONSTER CAPTURE

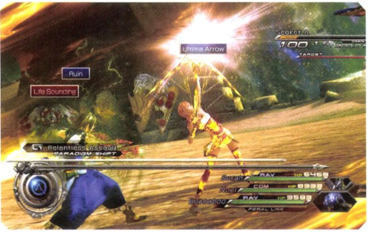
We can capture monsters and use them in battle. They're adequate companions, each with their own strengths. We can even customize them with hats and adornments.

MULTIPLE ENDINGS

While the game only has one true ending, there are a few hidden endings to be found for those willing to spend time unlocking the world's many secrets.

CINEMATIC ACTION

Some of the game's key fights employ quick-time events that, if successful, grant us a combat advantage over our enemies. We never had any trouble landing them all.

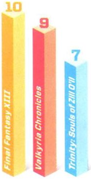


The Paradigm battle system offers a chance for some fun, strategic fights... on the rare occassion they last longer than 35 seconds.

We explored some truly breathtaking environments during our time with *XIII-2*.

powerful decision really toyed with our minds. In the end, our foe was dead at our feet—but what would've happened if we had spared him?

Our favorite moments in the game, though, came when we crossed blades with Caius. This is an interesting and powerful character who will stop at nothing to fulfill his personal wishes—including warping history to create his twisted vision of a future void of life—so every encounter we had with Caius was an exciting one. He's a challenging opponent and a perfect foil to Noel's kind-spirited nature, and we were eager to learn more about his dark past. We just wish we had *more* encounters with him during our journey. Since we only fought him a few times, he felt severely underutilized.



ScorePole

When it comes to JRPGs, *FFXIII-2* is one of PS3's stronger titles.

Time Investment

After several hours of traveling through time, something felt off. Sure, we could continue along the main story or explore to our heart's content, searching for collectibles or gates that would lead to exciting new places. But then we realized there are only about 12 actual locations in the entire game. Granted, each of them had two or three alternate timelines we could check out, but the level design of the zones remained more or less the same regardless of what year we explored them in.

Soon, one location bled into another. We began to lose our sense of purpose. How would traveling through time bring Serah closer to Lightning? What did we gain from opening new time gates and exploring parallel universes? Did the Fragments we were collecting have any real use, or were they simply a ploy to increase the longevity of our experience? Most of our story-related questions were neatly tied up during the final quarter of the game, but we'd spent so many hours feeling like we were wandering aimlessly through time that the overall experience began to sour.

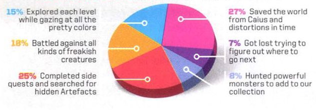
Our 30-hour romp through *XIII-2* created mixed emotions. There are a number of brave new mechanics in place—such as multiple endings and the ability to jump—that push the boundaries of what we've come to expect from a *Final Fantasy* title. But after such a strong beginning and ending to the game, we're super bummed we can't really recall anything interesting from the middle portion of our adventure.

XIII-2 is the non-linear installment fans have been hoping for, but it comes at the price of pacing. Beneath the emotional tale and a superb cast of characters lies an abundance of shallow filler content with no real purpose. It's disappointing to see a game with so much heart struggle under the burden of artificial mechanics. Don't misunderstand—*XIII-2* is a great game and nails the narrative experience: it has characters we truly care about, an engaging story, and a powerful mix of artwork and music that brings everything to life. It's *because* it does these things so well that *Final Fantasy* diehards will lament that it didn't live up to the series' classics.

RYAN TALJONICK

PlayStation The Official Magazine **8**

What we did in... Final Fantasy XIII-2



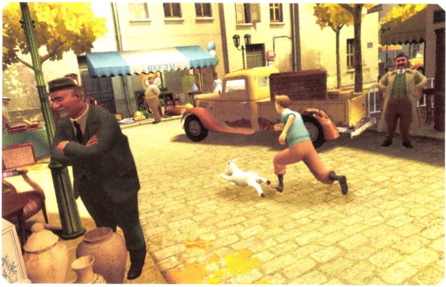
The Adventures of Tintin The Game

Boy detective sniffs out a good story

Info

PS3
The Adventures of
TINTIN
THE GAME
UBISOFT

Format PS3
Pub Ubisoft
Dev Ubisoft Montpellier
Price $39.99
ESRB Everyone 10+
It's like an under-stated *Uncharted* adventure.

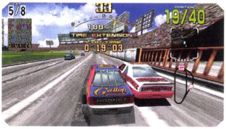


When Belgian cartoon icon Tintin finds a rather fetching model ship in his local market, no sooner has he made his purchase than a shady fellow snatches it from his hands. Our pompadoured hero gives chase, taking in sections that include a sinking ship and a chase through the desert. It's all a little bit Nathan Drake-ish.

Gameplay is a mix of 2D platforming and vehicle/tracking-based interludes. Combat combines battling villains up close with throwing objects and opening trapdoors under enemies' unsuspecting feet. Getting our timing right when trying to off a room full of henchmen proved surprisingly satisfying. The atmosphere of the *Tintin* world is spot-on as well. Our protagonist is cutely decked out, and the hilariously camp targets utter amusing background lines à la *Portal's* tragic turrets.

This isn't the most challenging game, however—it's more of a rainy-Sunday-afternoon sort of adventure. While bopping bad guys in order to unlock doors is fun, some tougher puzzles would have been a nice inclusion. The mechanics also get a little repetitive over the course of a few hours. Still, it's oddly immersive and genuinely enjoyable—an unusual feat for a movie tie-in. JAMES COATES

PlayStation **7**

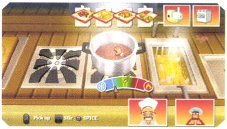


Daytona USA

Format **PSN** Pub **Sega** Dev **Sega**
Price **$9.99** ESRB **Everyone**

Now we can play the highest-grossing cabinet game of all time in the comfort of our own home, free of racing seats with questionable stains. And it holds up amazingly well for an 18-year-old title, with that twitchy drift handling and a real sensation of speed while bombing along at 200 mph. It definitely looks dated (even despite the fact that the textures have been HD-ified), but the gameplay is as addictive as ever and now there are 30 challenges, additional modes, and eight-player online racing over PSN. Plus, we can get to Victory Lane without forking over tons of loose change. JAMES COATES

PlayStation **7**



Order Up

Format **PS3** Pub **Ignition** Dev **SuperVillain Studios**
Price **$29.99** ESRB **Everyone**

Turns out what goes on in the back of a diner is much more child-friendly than we've been led to believe. Using the Move controller, we prepare cute little meals to feed the hungry public as fast as we can. We flipped burgers, chopped lettuce, stirred soup, and served all manner of starving (and occassionally angry) customers while timing each action just right. It's entertaining at first and progressively more challenging, but the lack of variety leaves a sour taste. Besides, we've spent enough time flipping burgers in real life. JAMES COATES

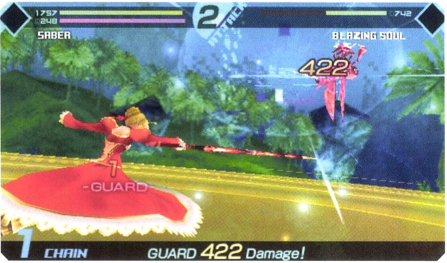
PlayStation **5**

uDraw Pictionary Ultimate Edition

Format **PS3** Pub **THQ** Dev **Page 44 Studios**
Price **$39.99 (game only)** ESRB **Everyone**

Pictionary is a game we all know and love, and *Ultimate Edition* provides us with some new variations. Pictionary Mania has draw modes like Ink Limit and Eraser Only, and Family Fun allows players to make their own rules. However, the required uDraw tablet (which costs an additional $79.99) is finicky and makes enjoying the game difficult. While we like the new ideas, we may just stick to the analog version we have tucked away in our closet. ANNE LEWIS

PlayStation **5**



Fate/Extra

A fate worse than many, many better RPGs

The makers of *Persona 3* and *4* should be proud. They have their first bona fide cheap imitation. Or maybe that's unfair—maybe the makers of *Fate/Extra* just drank from the same wells, so to speak. Either way, new-school *Persona* fans will find it's a lot like their favorites...just not as much fun.

Fate is a popular franchise in Japan, spawning games, cartoons, and an avalanche of plastic merchandising crap. The original story features a cabal of wizards and their "Servants"—spirits of historical heroes—having a grand free-for-all where the last wizard standing gets to make a wish. Our biggest wish? That *Extra* would have been an legitimately enjoyable experience. The game spins off into a mix of dungeon-crawling and social interaction that shifts the battle into a virtual high school coded to host seven days of fights to the death. The concept is fun, like the missing link between *.hack* and the movie *Battle Royale*. Behind it, though, are two crippling flaws. For one, the combat system is mindless junk—it's what we'd get if we boiled the battles from *Shin Megami Tensei* into something barely a step ahead of rock-paper-scissors. For another, aside from that clever concept, the script is painful to read.

This is not a knock on the Aksys Games localization, however. Nasu Kinoko, the scenario designer behind the entire *Fate* phenomenon, is infamously fond of the sound of his own voice, and the English edition of *Extra* simply does his style justice. The dialogue and narration are so pretentious and long-winded as to almost defy description. Seriously. We rolled our eyes more times than we can count. At its worst moments, this game is down on the level of teenage Goth poetry. Somewhere early in the process, Kinoko needed to receive an ultimatum: good ideas, good foundation, now make the script half as long—at most. And cut out around three-quarter of the adjectives. *That* might have made *Extra* almost readable. Still borderline unplayable, but readable.

Our hearts go out to the editors at Aksys, who couldn't have had fun working on this. The rest of us, luckily, don't have to endure what they did.

Persona 3 Portable is sitting right there. *Fate/Extra* is just a hack with a medium-hot license—play the real thing instead. DAVID F. SMITH

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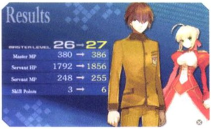
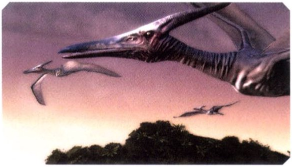


Our favorite thing about battles in *Fate/Extra* is that they ended.

Info

Format PSP
Pub Aksys Games **Dev** Type-Moon
Price $29.99/24.99 (download)
ESRB Teen **It's like** a *Persona* mod created by a teenage Goth poet.



Jurassic Park
The Game

Tyrannosaurus Wreck

Info

Format PSN
Pub Telltale Games
Dev Telltale Games
Price $29.99
(Ep. 1-4 Bundle)
ESRB Teen
It's like watching a decent flick with a broken projector.

The world of *Jurassic Park* and the hectic, quick-time-event driven gameplay of *Heavy Rain* might not seem like a natural combination, but Telltale managed to make it work in their videogame adaptation of the popular film franchise. We control a number of different characters throughout the cinematic adventure, from a veterinarian and his daughter to mercenaries sent to help evacuate survivors after the island becomes overrun by dinosaurs following the events of the first film. The story, the cast, the odd hopping-between-characters gameplay—they all work fairly well together.

Well, when they work, that is. Every step taken toward creating a cohesive, cinematic adventure is sabotaged by bugs and glitches that thwart the game's attempts at immersion. It's a shame, too, because the on-rails design and gameplay idiosyncrasies could have been forgiven if the presentation maintained the illusion of a film-like experience. But it was hard to feel like we were taking part in a movie when the game's frame rate flaked out every few minutes. Movies don't usually do that. ERICK CEIL

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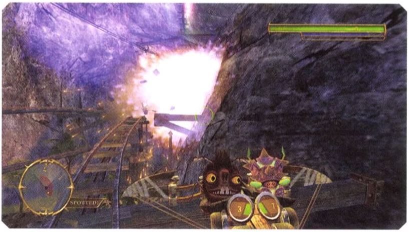
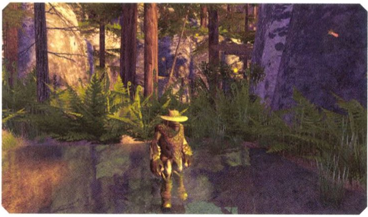
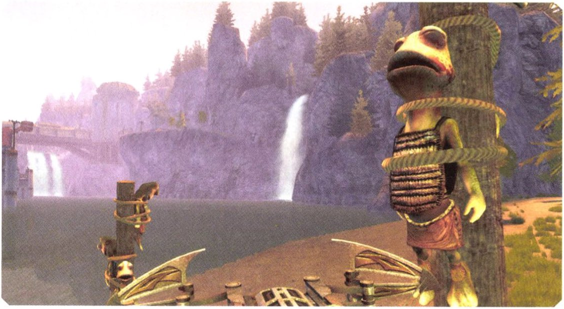
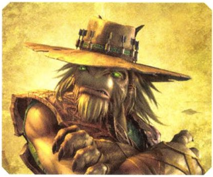




The HD treatment of Stranger's Wrath is one of the best we've seen; nearly every element of the game is far sharper and cleaner.





A denizen of the Wild West, Stranger is no stranger to danger. Also, sorry. We had to.

Oddworld Stranger's Wrath HD

The triumphant return of the Creature With No Name

Info

Format PSN
Pub Oddworld Inhabitants
Dev Just Add Water/Oddworld Inhabitants
Price $14.99
ESRB Teen
It's like *For a Few Dollars More*, if Clint Eastwood looked like an angry goat.

One of the great tragedies of the last console generation was that *Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath* was an abject failure at retail. The last of the *Oddworld* games, it was a dramatic departure from the rest of series, setting players loose in a twisted version of the Wild West as Stranger, a gravel-voiced bounty hunter on a quest for cash. Beneath that strange exterior, however, lay a unique mixture of tight third-person platforming, inventive first-person shooting, a little open-world mischief, and a beautiful, funny, and deceptively simple story.

As Stranger, we take on bounties in Old West towns before heading out into the wilds to track down criminal gangs, take them down by nonlethal or lethal means, and "bounty" them by sucking them into a can on Stranger's wrist. At Stranger's disposal are his own fists and a double-barreled crossbow that fires various little live creatures (which can be hunted in the wild). These have a surprising amount of personality and a wide variety of effects: They can bind foes in webbing, make them vomit uncontrollably, lure them into ambushes, blow them up, or riddle them with bullet-like wasps.

For a while, the game follows a somewhat open, mission-based structure, with Stranger hunting down one goofy outlaw after another to save up for a mysterious operation. About two-thirds through, however, something happens that radically alters the structure of the game, as well as our perception of just who and what Stranger really is. It's here that the game goes from being a somewhat silly adventure to something truly amazing—although even before then, it's immensely fun.

As it turns out, *Stranger's Wrath* is just as fun now as it was in 2005, and thanks to this HD re-release on PSN, those who skipped it before now have a chance to see what they missed. *Stranger's Wrath* was a fantastic-looking game for its time, and the HD cleanup makes it look convincingly current-gen. Developer Just Add Water has updated the character models, environments, and sound, making everything look sharper and just as pretty as our idealized memories.

Sadly, the remastering job isn't perfect. The sound is occasionally glitchy, and shadows have a tendency to be visible through the surfaces they're cast onto. Even so, this is an impressive revamp of a lost classic, and anyone who missed it the first time—or who just wants an excuse to replay it—should seize this second chance immediately.

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MIKEL REPARAZ

Dynasty Warriors 7 Xtreme Legends

Format **PS3** Pub **Temco Koei** Dev **Omega Fource** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Teen**

Though sporting a shrunken price tag, *Dynasty Warriors 7: Extreme Legends* arrives on store shelves as a full, standalone title rather than the glorified expansion pack it actually is. Most of the environments and battles have been recycled from previous titles, and while decent graphics and a solid frame rate will please the eye, the heavy metal scathing guitar soundtrack is sure to upset your dog. The only real additions are three new characters. Only true fans of the series need apply here.

PlayStation **5**

RUSSELL GARBUTT

Just Dance 3

Format **PS3** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Ubisoft Paris** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Everyone 10+**

There's not much that needs to be said about *Just Dance 3* beyond "It's got a great beat and you can dance to it." After a successful run on Wii and Xbox, this third incarnation marks the franchise's debut on PS3 with a required but remarkably fuss-free PS Move implementation. The 45 dance tracks offer a nice variety from classics like Wilson Pickett's "Land of 1000 Dances" to contemporary mainstays like LMFAO's "Party Rock Anthem," while an array of modes keep the challenge fresh. The Just Sweat mode that offers a personal exercise regime is a nice bonus too. *Dance 3* delivered exactly the fun, casual experience we expected.

PlayStation **7**

ROGER BURCHILL

Invizimals Shadow Zone

Format **PSP** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Novarama** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Everyone 10+**

Last year's *Invizimals* was a surprisingly entertaining *Pokémon*-style creature capture game that allowed for innovative interaction between virtual beasts and real-world environments via an add-on PSP camera peripheral. *Shadow Zone* features a new collection of monsters and world locations along with expanded control inputs, but the overall experience remains very similar. Most 10-year-old newcomers will be delighted, while series veterans may be underwhelmed by the minor gameplay updates and changes. Younger kids will likely be enthralled by the game as well, but some of the unique control interactions (motion, sound, etc.) will require parental intervention.

PlayStation **7**

ROGER BURCHILL

DLC Roundup

NBA 2K12 Legends Showcase

Price **$9.99** ESRB **Everyone**

Set in a stylish, cel-shaded version of NYC's Times Square, this DLC does a lot more than change up *2K12's* look and add a few extra play modes. With more than 150 legendary ballers to pick from, the possibilities for epic match combinations simply rock—as in, pass us the rock!

Dead Island Bloodbath Arena

Price **$9.99** ESRB **Mature**

Fast-traveling to this remote bunker yields four different arena maps that challenge our zombie massacring skills. Chopping up waves of brain-hungry beasties also gets an interesting twist with specific challenges that reward crafty players. Lots of XP makes grinding levels easy with this DLC.

Download of the Month

Batman: Arkham City Robin Bundle

Price **$6.99** ESRB **Teen**

Sidekick shmide-kick. Robin may get stuck playing second fiddle most of the time, but he can kick some serious backside. The Robin Bundle gives him the chance to shine, making him playable in each challenge map as well as the two new maps included with this DLC. Cool gadgetry, pummeling moves, and extra opportunities to throw down abound.

Fright Night 3D

How modern vampire movies should be done

Info

Price $49.99
Creators Craig Gillespie, Marti Noxon, Tom Holland
Starring Anton Yelchin, Colin Farrell, David Tennant, Christopher Mintz-Plasse
Rated R
Extras Deleted and extended scenes, making-of shorts, and the "uncut" version of Squidman home movie.

The original *Fright Night* was one of the best horror flicks of the '80s with its clever plot about a kid who hires late-night horror movie host Peter Vincent to help him dispatch his vampire neighbor. It was fun and deftly managed to balance humor and horror. The re-make takes that original plot and updates it amazingly well. Late night fright fests are a thing of the past, so Peter Vincent is now a Chriss Angel-style stage magician played with vigor by former Doctor Who, David Tennant.

Colin Farrell—as Jerry Dandridge, the vampire neighbor—has made a career out of making sexy outright creepy and he's perfect here. His good looks can barely hide the psychopath just under the surface and Dandridge comes across as a vampire who truly adores being a monster. The film's protagonist is Charley Brewster (Anton Yelchin), a likeable nerd who's finally starting to find popularity in high school, with a hottie girlfriend and tenuous relations with his geek squad.

When people start disappearing all over his Nevada desert housing development, Charley starts to think maybe his former best buddy (Evil Eddy, played by the go-to actor for evil geeks, Christopher Mintz-Plasse) is right about his neighbor eating people. The horror elements are more trumped up this time around (and certainly bigger budget) and the movie has plenty of genuine chills and splatter.

The general paranoia of living in suburbia is played to good effect as well. *Fright Night* also uses 3D to great effect, mixing in-your-face scares with an excellent sense of depth through the whole film—but the movie ultimately leaves an impression because of its cleverness. Jerry is a vampire who thrives on playing with his food, and the mismatched cat-and-mouse game between Jerry and Charlie is thoroughly entertaining.

The movie also expands on the idea of vampire myths, which is a totally new concept, and Tennant is thoroughly entertaining whenever he's on screen. If there's a downside to this release, it's the lack of extras. There are some deleted and extended scenes, a couple of lame making-of shorts, and the "uncut" version of Charley's geeky Squidman home movie. No commentary or mention of the original film is included at all. JASON D'APRILE

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Zebraman 2: Attack on Zebra City

Nobody does crazy quite like Japan

There are movies that can't be unseen once they're watched, where the viewer sits rapt with mouth gaping in disbelief. Many of these seem to come from foreign lands—Japan in particular. *Zebraman 2* is exactly this sort of movie. It's the sort of crazy that seems to only come from the Far East, and even by those standards, this movie is utter insanity.

Zebraman 2 is a superhero movie seemingly made in an effort to filter Christopher Nolan's Batman through a Japanese lens, and the results are completely awe-inspiring. Takashi Miike, who previously creeped out and shocked film lovers with *Ichi the Killer* and *Audition*, directed this gem of insane filmmaking.

It doesn't require any knowledge of the first movie to enjoy. *Zebraman 2* takes place 20 years after the hero saved Tokyo from evil blobby aliens and suddenly disappeared. When he wakes up in the streets of a changed city, he finds a tyrannical ruler has re-named Tokyo to Zebra City and instituted Zebra Time—where twice a day, the zebra guards can kill anyone on the streets and terrible crimes are committed without repercussions.

The movie opens with Zebra Queen—the daughter of said tyrannical leader—performing an S&M-laced pop song and dance number, and goes whole hog when it comes to adding extremely absurd comic book-level science and antics. The action is excellent, the pacing moves along at its own crazy beat, and the climax may be one of the most bizarre sequences ever put on film. Indeed, the only thing missing to make this superbly creative trip to crazy land complete would have been filming it in 3D.

Zebraman 2 is a gem for fans of Japanese cinema and open-minded viewers in search of a truly distinctive experience. The extras aren't terrible either, complete with cast interviews, trailers, and making-of videos. JD

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Info

Price $29.98 **Creator** Takashi Miike **Starring** Sho Aikawa, Riisa Naka, Tsuyoshi Abe **Rated** Not Rated **Extras** Cast interviews, making-of videos, and more.

Blu-ray Roundup

Warrior

Price $39.99 **Rated** PG-13

A layered and complex fight film, *Warrior* was one of the biggest surprises of last year, with gritty and brutal fighting and deep character relationships. This is far from a traditional Rocky rip-off and the most engaging alt-sports film since *The Wrestler.* ⑧

Cowboys and Aliens

Price $34.98 **Rated** PG-13

We really wanted to like this movie, with its terrific cast and concept, but the lazy script just falls flat. The characters are two-dimensional and while the action looks great, it makes little sense—especially the embarrassingly brain dead climax battle. ⑤

Helldriver

Price $29.98 **Rated** Not Rated

If *Zebraman* is Batman put through the Japanese filter, then *Helldriver* is the *Evil Dead 2* equivalent. While this roller coaster of insanity runs a bit too long and embraces its love of splatter to a fault, lovers of the genre will be in slack-jawed amazement through every chainsaw-slashing moment. ⑦

Kung Fu Panda 2

Price $49.99 **Rated** PG

Kung Fu Panda was one of the few good non-Pixar animated flicks in recent years. It was funny and fun, and so is its sequel. It serves kids and adults nicely thanks to entertaining action, a solid script, and some surprisingly dramatic elements. ⑦

Want that

Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

Lexdray Boulder

Whether transporting a PS3, perishable groceries, or enriched uranium, this backpack delivers with 10 zipper pockets, a back-entry compartment, a breathable air-mesh back panel, hidden waterproof cover, detachable key ring, and a padded neoprene top handle.

$460

lexdray.com

Audioengine 5+

It's tough to match Audioengine's bang for the auditory buck. The A5+ delivers fantastically rich, full sound and booming bass, has multiple connections, and the ability to charge USB powered devices.

$400-$470/pair

audioengineusa.com

LunaTik Lynk

Dick Tracey wishes he were this sophisticated. The Lynk is built for the 6th/7th generation iPod Nano, and gets it onto a wrist in high style. The lightweight construction offers the comfort of silicone against the skin, combined with the look of precision-machined metal.

$129-$139

lunatik.com

Cocoon Grid-it

The modern-day traveler has to account for a lot of digital gear, with all manner of related accessories and chargers. Grid-it's many, various-sized elastic straps can secure any manner of cords, adapters, and other digital paraphernalia.

$10-$50

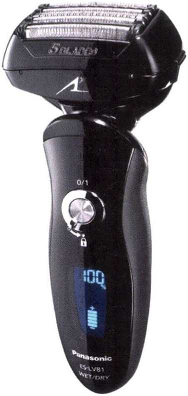
cocooninnovations.com

Samsung Galaxy S II Skyrocket

The 4G-capable Skyrocket has 1GB of RAM, an eight-megapixel rear camera with LED flash and 1080p video, and a two megapixel front camera.

$249 w/ contract

samsung.com



Panasonic ES-LV81-K Arc 5 shaver

Looking to save some face? The Arc 5's wet/dry action allows shaving in the shower or at the sink, and five thin foil blades give a fantastically close shave.

$443

panasonic.com

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

HELLO
my name is
Chris

This is **Chris**, hardcore gamer. He's been playing games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB ratings** to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** — he just doesn't know it yet.

mail@ptom

PS3 | PSP | PS VITA
PlayStation The Official Magazine
UNCHARTED 3
Drake's BEST adventure yet? Read our definitive review
THE GAMER'S GIFT GUIDE 2011
MAX IS BACK! Hands-on with Rockstar's MAX PAYNE 3
REVIEWED BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY Saints Row: The Third Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One LOTR: War in the North
WIN STUFF Enter our MAD sweepstakes! p96
FINAL FANTASY XIII-2 VITA
MASS EFFECT 3 STARHAWK

The funny thing is, this still beats flying United.

Poster problems, collector woes, and teenage trauma—you've got trouble, PTOM's got answers

Email us at **PTOM_letters@futureus.com** or write to PTOM, c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Ct. Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Know Thyself

I enjoy your magazine. It has many articles that this 58-year-old gamer finds interesting. I have learned, however, that when it comes to some first-person shooters and RPGs, I will not be able to use your reviews as a reliable guide for whether I will enjoy a game or not. For instance, Roger Burchill gave *Rage* a 7 based on the story and the driving segments, apparently knocking off two or three points for these. I, on the other hand, enjoyed the driving segments very much, and I personally rate story way behind gameplay, which I also found extremely engaging in *Rage*. I have now played this game through three times and still find it a blast. Regarding *Dark Souls*: I refuse to play games that are ridiculously brutal. There is no excuse for not at least adding an easy difficulty level in there for us old guys. Seriously, I enjoy your magazine every month and hope your reviews will someday become ones that I can use.

HUNTJAMES THE INTERNET

Honestly, Hunt, it sounds like you're already using our reviews. Just because you don't agree with a reviewer's opinions or final score doesn't mean the review can't be helpful. You don't like punishingly difficult games? No problem! While you personally might have given Dark Souls *a lower score, Ryan's review still gave you some vital information that helped you decide whether or not you would enjoy the game. The review text is there so you can weigh the reviewer's like and dislikes against your own personal preferences. The fact that you know your own tastes so well just makes that process easier!*

Rip Off

I love your magazine; I can't wait every month for a new issue to read. But I can't stand one thing about the magazine. It's the posters. Don't get me wrong, I love the posters, it's just that they're such a pain to rip out. I swear, the *Resistance 3* poster from Issue 50 (October 2011) was so hard to tear out I ended up ripping the poster. Please find a better way to put the poster in the magazine. Surely I can't be the only one with this problem. **PATRICK** CANADA

We'll do our best to find a better way to put posters into our magazines, but in the meantime, may we suggest scissors as a better way of getting them out?

The End is Meh

I just want to ask your opinion of the *Batman: Arkham City* ending. Personally,

We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PlayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.

I loved it but hated it at the same time. I am not going to say anything more about the ending (so I don't spoil it for those who have not finished), but at the end, I was simply depressed. I hate how every game that I've bought in the past three months has a horrible plot twist at the end. This ending reminded me of the *Star Wars: Force Unleashed II* ending. That is exactly how I feel about *Arkham City*.
CONNOR MICHIGAN

Plot twists are common because they're easy and, unfortunately, we've come to expect them. Without that M. Night Shyamalan moment, we might feel little payoff for all those long, hard hours of gaming. Games like BioShock *prove twists don't have to be bad, though, as long as they're thoughtful. As for* Arkham City, *at least you didn't stab yourself with a lightsaber, right?*

Collector's Submission

I am an RPG collector and gaming fanatic who tries to buy collector's, limited, and special editions whenever possible. I love all the extra goodies and stuff that come with them. But is it just me or does it seem to be getting a little out of control lately? $140 for *Lord of the Rings: War in the North* Collector's Edition? $150 for *Skyrim* Collector's Edition? Sure, I understand the ever-rising cost of PVC dragons these days, but this seems more than a little ridiculous! Is this how publishers offset their development costs now? I know it's my option not to buy these versions, but now I just can't afford to.
MR. SCARY DES MOINES, IA

Are collector's editions growing more and more outrageous? In some cases, yes. Is it a way for publishers to offset to the ever increasing cost of game development? Sure. Will a $40 replica Batman statue actually make Arkham City *that much more enjoyable? Of course not...BUT WE WANT IT SO BAD! That said, if you choose not buy these arguably overpriced packages, publishers will get the message real quick.*

Oy Vey!

Sorry to nit-pick, but in the Holiday 2011 issue, you said Chanukah starts December 8th but it actually starts the 20th. It is an easy mistake to make as Jewish holidays are on the Jewish calendar. P.S. You can tell I am a pro from my last name.
BRANDON GOLDBERG MONTREAL, CANADA

No need to apologize, Brandon—this is definitely not nit-picking. Getting the date of a major holiday wrong is a pretty big oversight. We're sincerely sorry, but blame former Editor in Chief Gary Steinman. If he still worked here, he totally would have caught that. Way to leave us hanging, Gary.

Patch Perfect

I can't get enough of *Uncharted*. I believe it is one of if not *the* best franchise on PS3. *Uncharted 3* is amazing, but there's one thing that is seriously holding it back: Moving Drake is extremely hard to get used to for me. I understand that Naughty Dog was trying to make his movements more fluid, but it is way unpolished. In *Uncharted 2*, making your way around the battlefield was a breeze. However, in *Uncharted 3*, all I seem to ever do is frustratingly stumble around, accidentally over-shooting cover while being peppered with a hail of bullets till Nathan drops like a sack of bricks. What was so wrong with *Uncharted 2*'s controls? They were perfect! Will Naughty Dog create a patch that will harken back to the glory of *Uncharted 2*'s controls, and if not, will I be chastised for begging at Naughty Dog's feet?
KEVIN HALL THE INTERNET

While Roger (who reviewed Uncharted 3 *for us) had no problem acclimating to newer controls, we've actually heard this complaint from quite a few people. Fortunately, Brandon, Naughty Dog's been listening too and has released a patch that skews the feel back toward* Uncharted 2*'s controls. Let us know if you think it's rectified the problem.*

Ask Anne

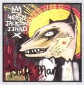
Q **All right, so my parents only let me play "Teen" rated games. Which are the best for PS3?**
CONNOR P
THE INTERNET

A Parents just don't understand, right? Don't worry, Connor, just because they want to protect your fragile, innocent brain for as long as possible doesn't mean you can't have some fun. Be sure to check out the *Uncharted* series, *Batman: Arkham Asylum* and *Arkham City*, *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit*, *Marvel vs. Capcom 3*, *Portal 2*, *Final Fantasy XIII*, and *LittleBigPlanet 2*.

Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM

Cyborg R.A.T. 7 Gaming Mouse "Sometimes it's the little, everyday things that make life better. Replacing my Apple mouse with Mad Catz's latest uber-mouse has improved my productivity and my kill ratio."
ROGER BURCHILL



Knife Man "Andrew Jackson Jihad is definitely a polarizing band. Their offbeat lyrics and spastic folk style might put off certain listeners. But for fans like me, their latest album *Knife Man* is a triumph."
SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA
SEASON ONE

Battlestar Galactica "I know, I know—I'm late to the party. But darn it, I can't stop watching *Battlestar Galactica*! (The Sci-Fi Channel version, of course.) Ya know what though? I'm starting to think Anne's a Cylon..."
RYAN TALJONICK

Alaskan Klee Kai "I can't be a Cylon because I feel love for furry creatures. Alas, my house can't support a big dog so the Alaskan Klee Kai, a mini husky, would be perfect for me. Can I get one on Amazon?"
ANNE LEWIS

PSN Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without.

BEST FULL GAMES

1

Creepy Crawly Platformer

Limbo

Limbo may have taken its time coming to PSN, but it was worth the wait. The game melds simple controls with supremely challenging gameplay and a beautiful, but chilling, aesthetic. It's the rare game where we die often but never feel frustrated about it.

10 Pub **Playdead**
Dev **Playdead**

2

Tricks and Treats

Costume Quest

Sure, it's Halloween themed, but the adventure itself is timeless. With candy and monster-smiting in equal measure, this sugary delight is a charming homage to *Final Fantasy X-2*, enhanced by Tim Schafer's humor.

9 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**

3

Frightening Lightning

inFamous
Festival of Blood

This standalone spinoff sees *inFamous* hero Cole MacGrath facing off against vampires. At stake? (groan) Cole's very own soul. It's enough to make vampires fashionably cool again—in spite of *Twilight*.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Sucker Punch**

4

Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

A mix of *ExciteBike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting wild and dangerous has never been this awesome.

9 Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**

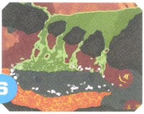
5

Zen Exploration

Flower

This gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest triple-A offerings. Don't pass this one up.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**



6

Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

Featuring alien and rock blasting galore, the fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best. Saving trapped mining colonists with a versatile, environmental puzzle-solving ship is a creative and challenging affair that taxes both our mind and our reflexes.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

7

Lettuce Defend Ourselves

Plants vs. Zombies

This ubiquitous tower defense game has made the platform rounds, but there's no denying its insidious charms and eternal goofiness. Hours will be spent meticulously maintaining the grid-like lawn in an attempt to fend off the rampaging waves of groaning, brain-chomping zombies.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **PopCap Games**

8

Role-playing Puzzler

Might & Magic
Clash of Heroes

Don't overlook *Heroes* with its throwback 2D visuals and turn-based battle system—the RPG-flavored puzzle action requires stacking creatures for attacks and building walls for defense. It may look and play old school, but it's still mighty fun and magically challenging.

9 Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Capybara Games**

9

Hardcore brawler

Street Fighter III
Third Strike Online

This perfect port of the legendary 1997 arcade game features all new netcode that virtually eliminates lag. *Third Strike's* deep, demanding mechanics have earned it a diehard following. It deserves to be rediscovered and celebrated.

9 Pub **Capcom**
Dev **Capcom/Iron Galaxy**

10

Dolled-Up Adventure

Stacking

Double Fine games come chock full of personality and charm. Using babushka dolls to solve puzzles and explore a '30s Depression-era-esque world of miniature mannequins may not seem all that compelling, but it is. This is a fine argument for Double Fine to make more PSN titles.

8 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're downloading to our PS3 this month

"I pay you to get on first, not get thrown out at second."

Moneyball

ETA **Jan 10** Rated **PG-13** Genre **Sports/Drama** Studio **Sony Pictures**

We're terrible at baseball. Truth be told, we're still haunted by distant little league memories of jumping out of the batter's box to avoid blazing-fast pitches. But some people don't cave under pressure. Based on a true story, *Moneyball* recounts the struggle of Oakland Athletics' general manager Billy Beane to assemble a competitive team for the 2002 season under the restrictions of a severely limited player payroll. Against all odds, Beane and his team set an American League record for winning 20 consecutive games.

Top VDS Downloads

Movies

The Change-Up (Unrated)
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2
Crazy, Stupid, Love
Super 8
Horrible Bosses

TV Shows

The Walking Dead: Season 2
Sons of Anarchy: Season 4
Breaking Bad: Season 4
Family Guy: Season 10
American Horror Story: Season 1

BEST FREE STUFF

1

Best Name Evar

GoldenEye 007: Reloaded Pussy Galore

Gals and guns go together like tonic with a twist, and this freebie lets us play as iconic Bond girl Pussy Galore. Nothing like shooting with style.

Pub **Activision**
Dev **Eurocom**

2

Gal Pal

Elevator Action HD Time Gal

The frenetic elevator hopping mayhem gets a bit sassier thanks to this free download that unlocks the heroine from Japanese FMV arcade game *Time Gal* as a new playable character.

Pub **Taito**
Dev **Taito/Sync**

3

Seasonal Cycle

MotoGP 10/11 2011 Season Update

Tired of the same ol' current season kit? This sweet free upgrade unlocks a ton of fresh 2011 season content, including all of the riders, teams, and tracks we crave for maximum rubber-burning awesomeness.

Pub **Capcom**
Dev **Monumental Games**

4

The Beat Goes On

Patapon 3 Perfect March Challenge

We march to the beat of a different drummer: one that goes "Chicka-chicka Pata-Pon," which is why this first set of downloadable missions has redefined our battle cry.

Pub **SOE**
Dev **Pyramid/SCE Japan Studio**

5

Overspray

Sideway: New York Theme

Hip Hop culture and unruly creatures collide in this graffiti-inspired theme that blends together pink spray paint, monstrous baddies, and funky sound effects. It's a quirky mashup of weirdness.

Pub **SOE**
Dev **Play Brains/Fuel Industies**

Dinosaurs

Life finds a way to eat your face with PlayStation's deadliest dinos

Raptor

Tomb Raider: Anniversary

Ms. Croft, say hello to the deadliest doorknob-turning dinosaur the world has ever seen. We think everyone will get along famously. Lovely Lara stumbles upon *Anniversary's* pack-hunters in an ancient South America valley. Clever girl that she... *Arrrrgh*! NOT THE ESOPHAGUS!

Spike

Jurassic: The Hunted

Not enough extinct mega-beasts sport comedic monikers. Thankfully, *Jurassic* comes up with a clever, inventive nickname for its main baddie: Spike...the Spinosaurus. If you can control your fits of LOLs, you'll be saddened to discover that the giant hunter is easy to best, thanks to his *glowing* vital organs.

Gon

Tekken 3

When you think of classic King of Iron Fist fighters, it's probably Nina Williams or that tough old dud in the diaper that spring to mind. Thi cute anime dinosaur also deserves a mention, though. Not only is he a protector of fuzzy animals, his finishing move is called Gon With the Wind. Frankly, my dear, I don't give a dino.

Mama Scarface

Turok

If there's one lesson Joseph Turok's damn manly escapades have taught us, it's that a massive machete to the face is capable of beating an ancient lizard every time. Well, unless said lizard is a 40-foot predator. For these occasions, something bigger is needed. Rocket launcher, anyone?

Dilophosaurus

Jurassic Park: The Game

Or "those wee spitty buggers" as you'll probably know them from Spielberg's dino film. When they aren't blinding the big-boned cop from *Third Rock*, they can be found trying to kill the heroine in Telltale's QTE-tastic take on the 1993 flick.

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